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SPECIAL ISSUE

27

**BRAVE
THINKERS**

**WHO ARE
SHAPING THE
FUTURE**

**Kidnapper
for Hire:
The Story
of a Child's
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Architectural
Revolution**

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Mayor John Fetterman of Braddock, Pa.,
is reimagining the postindustrial town

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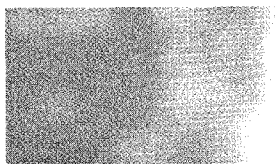
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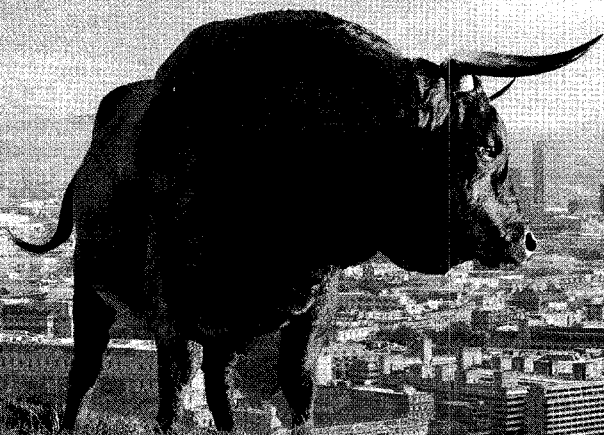


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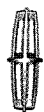
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By Nadya Labi



CLEANER. FASTER.

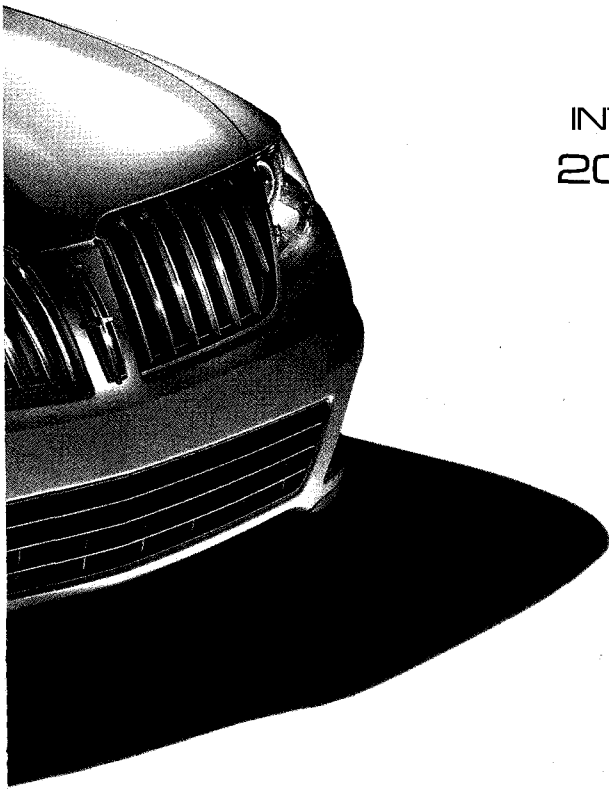


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Witness to Abduction

Nadya Labi narrates
photos from her
harrowing trip to Costa
Rica with Gus Zamora,
a professional child-
snatcher.



VIDEO

Mid-Century Modern

Benjamin Schwarz
deconstructs scenes
from *Mad Men*, and
explains why its period
exactitude has such
contemporary appeal.



RECIPES

Travels With Bacchus

Wayne Curtis reveals
the ingredients of some
adventurous cocktails
from around the
world—and the stories
behind their discovery.



VIDEO

Profiles in Courage

Short documentaries
look into the lives of
a few of the brave
thinkers—highlighted in
this month's issue—who
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CARIN BAER/AMC



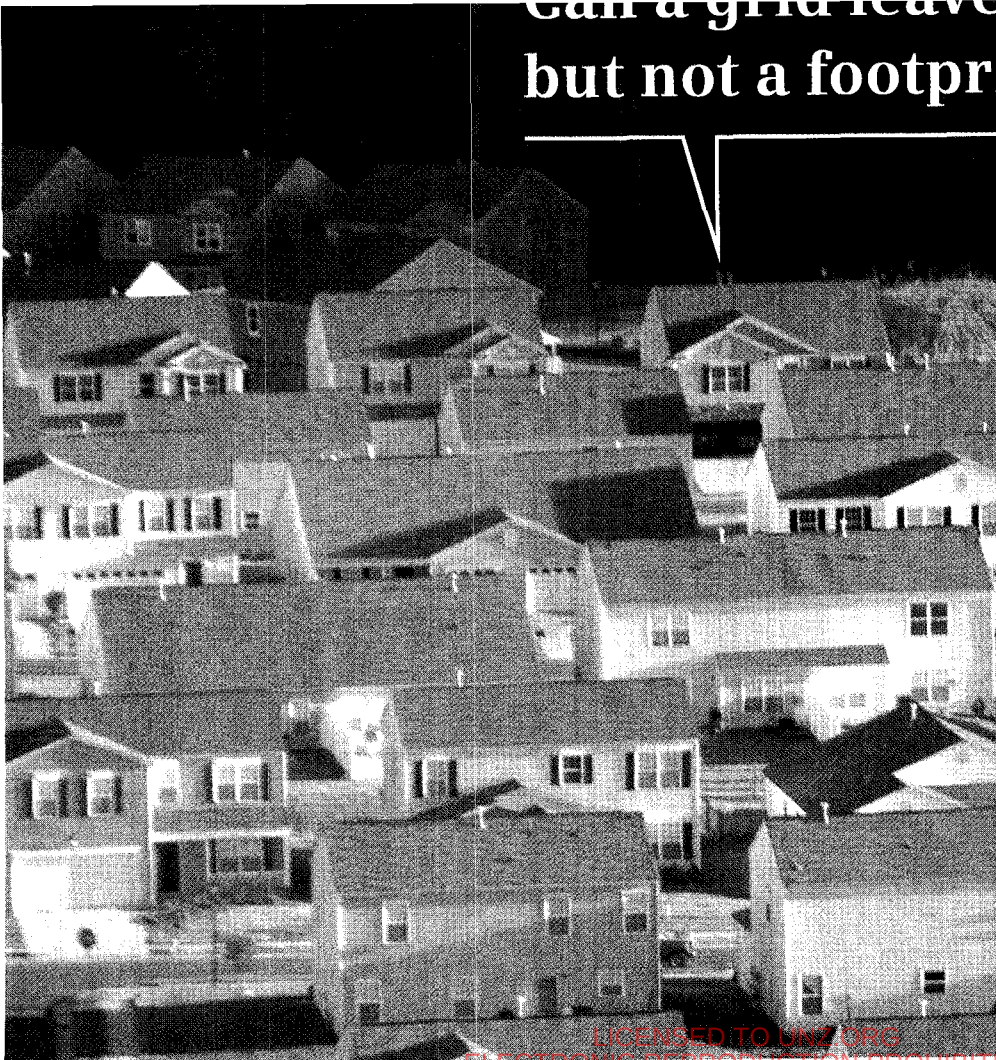
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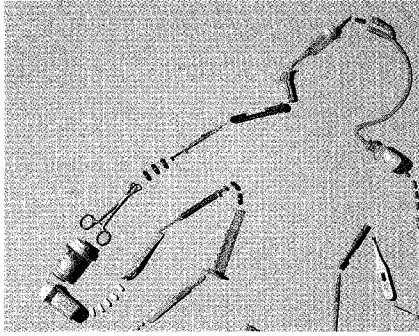
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



A PRESCRIPTION FOR HEALTH CARE

David Goldhill's disclaimer in "How American Health Care Killed My Father" (September *Atlantic*) that his observations may be nothing new to industry insiders is probably true. However, in my 25-year career in health-care operations, I have never before encountered so comprehensive, succinct, and compelling an assessment of the tangled mess that is American health care. I immediately forwarded the link to my congressman, and to 300 of my closest friends. Bravo for his hard work and insight. I can't imagine a more powerful memorial to his tragically departed father than this spectacular article.

BRANDON HULL
PRINCETON, N.J.

David Goldhill's article was brilliant, timely, accurate, spot-on—and irrelevant. Why? Not because of the doctors or the insurance companies or the hospitals or all the other interest groups, but because Americans want more insurance, not less. Goldhill advocates

self-insurance for all but catastrophic care, which makes perfect financial sense. However, most Americans are busy buying more and more insurance for smaller and smaller calamities. If people are not willing to self-insure for iPod repairs, what are the chances they will self-insure for colonoscopies? I would say zero, which is frustrating and depressing. Here Goldhill has provided a clear way to cut health-care costs, and there is no chance of its happening.

MIKE MORSE
KENSINGTON, MD.

Throughout history, when societies have found that a service was needed for the common good, that service was created, and people chose to tax themselves to provide it. Armies, fire departments, water systems, police departments—all were created and paid for as the need arose. It makes no more sense to expect only those who can afford health care to have it than it would to make sure you have a valid credit card before dialing the fire department. The fact that the U.S. is the only industrialized country

that has not figured this out speaks not only to our current obsession with the "consumerism" that David Goldhill bases his plan upon, but also to the tainted origin of our employer-based system of health care.

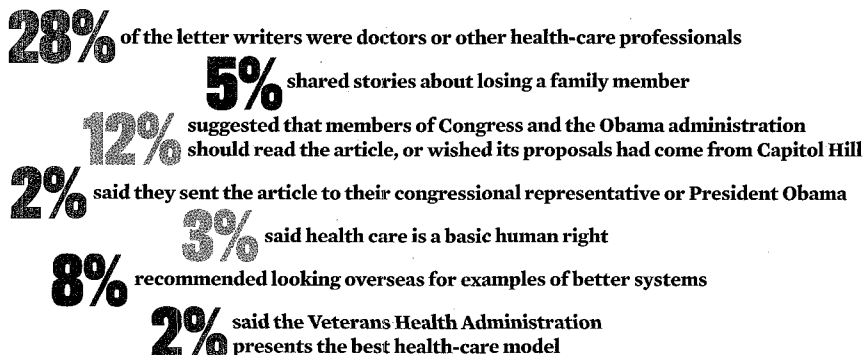
In World War II, the government enacted wage controls in an effort to ease the country through a demanding economic time. Corporations, to seduce the most-talented workers away from their current jobs, circumvented the intent of Congress by providing health insurance as a "benefit," thus offering essentially a higher wage without technically breaking the law. From this wartime finagling was born the employer-based private health-insurance system we are saddled with today.

Studies have shown that a true single-payer system (aka "Medicare for All") would cost about as much as the current total expenditure for health care in this country. Unfortunately, any Band-Aid-type solution, such as the public option, that still supports and encourages the already proven failure of private health insurance will undoubtedly lead us further down the road toward medical bankruptcy.

MIKE MAHONEY
SANDPOINT, IDAHO

Log

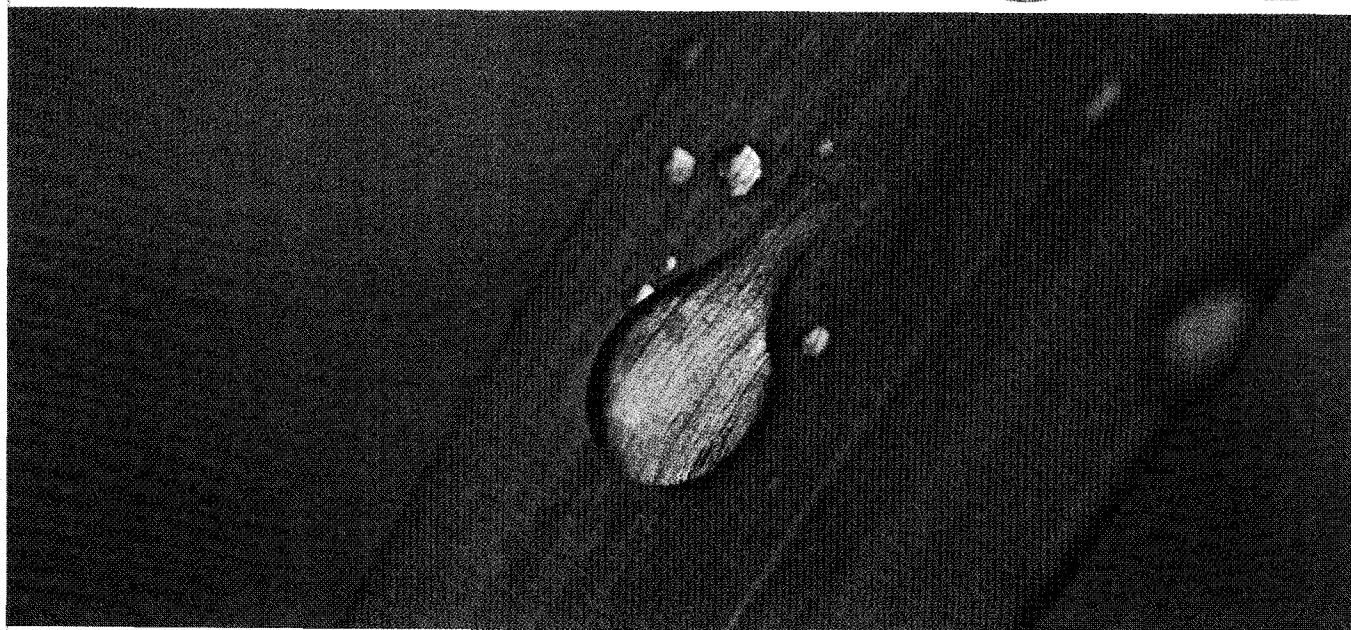
DAVID GOLDHILL'S SEPTEMBER COVER STORY, "HOW AMERICAN HEALTH CARE KILLED MY FATHER," PROVOKED A VARIETY OF RESPONSES FROM READERS. SOME COMMON THREADS:



As a physician working in a tertiary-care hospital treating the sickest of our population, I agree wholeheartedly with David Goldhill that our current health-care system has many flaws and needs a massive overhaul. But I disagree that moving toward a consumer-based model is the solution, because health care is not a consumer-based commodity. Purchasing health care is not like buying a house or a car, because the complexity

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

of medical decision-making cannot be summarized in a few easily digestible sentences. There are usually no right or wrong answers in medicine, but different options, each with its own risks and benefits, which would be difficult to quantify in monetary terms. Good health care is not compatible with a purely business model, because the easiest way for insurance companies or hospitals to make money is to avoid people who are sick.

The solution is to create not a consumer-based system but rather a patient-based system, where patients have primary responsibility for taking care of their health. Studies have shown that preventative measures such as weight loss and smoking cessation have a much greater impact on overall mortality than any expensive medications needed down the line. Allowing patients more awareness of and accountability for where their health-care dollars are going is a step in the right direction—but a system where patients are responsible for the funding, decision-making, and monitoring of health care seems chaotic and would place a large burden upon those who are sick.

PREETI ROUT, M.D.
BOSTON, MASS.

David Goldhill's suggestion that major medical expenses—"including much end-of-life care"—be paid for out of personal savings and credit, while catastrophic insurance be limited to "massive, unpredictable expenses," sets the stage for a new and contentious administrative nightmare: How would we decide whether end-of-life care was catastrophic or not? Would the \$636,687.75 bill for Mr. Goldhill's father, who spent his last five weeks in a hospital, be subject to a savings-and-credit charge, or be covered by insurance? A \$600,000 bill would be catastrophic for almost everyone, regardless of treatment classification.

Also, Mr. Goldhill's suggestion that under a consumer-centered system we'd likely see a new breed of "health-care agent," paid for by consumers and responsible for steering them to the best medical option when health problems occur, overlooks the fact that these agents would quickly become subject to energetic sales pitches by every profit-oriented hospital, medical group, and insurance company around. As long as profit remains the driving force, health care will remain a commodity instead of a human right.

HOWARD BLUTH
BALTIMORE, MD.

David Goldhill's proposal to place the patient in the role of direct consumer is

"As long as profit remains the driving force, health care will remain a commodity instead of a human right."

a compelling economic idea, but it carries with it certain ethical perils for physicians. When a third party pays the bill, the physician has a layer of insulation between the financial component on one side, and the care component—the physician and the patient—on the other. With patients as payers, however, physi-

cians become de facto salesmen, having to navigate a conflict-of-interest minefield every time they propose treatment options. This sort of arrangement would undoubtedly degrade the fiduciary doctor-patient relationship.

IAN G. DORWARD, M.D.
ST. LOUIS, MO.

As an emergency physician 20 years deep into practice, I have witnessed the battle over spiraling costs firsthand. When the topic of electronic medical records comes up, what you tend to hear is how they increase efficiency, enhance data sharing, and reduce medical errors, leading to improved care at a lower cost. It sounds so good that the government has mandated that hospitals move to EMRs in order to receive future Medicare reimbursements. What isn't mentioned is how the data first gets into the record. At my hospital,



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

it gets there when I type it—one finger at a time. Hospital administrators, having shelled out \$25 million or more for the implementation of EMRs, are not about to allocate additional funds for transcription, especially to a busy emergency department already seen as a money loser.

During a typical eight-hour shift, I spend about five hours performing basic data entry. The EMR has dropped my efficiency by 30 percent. Another unintended consequence is that the number of medical errors on my part, far from declining, has gone up exponentially. Computer screens list all the patients in the department, and it is extraordinarily easy during a busy shift to simply click the wrong box. It happens daily.

ROBERT CLARE, M.D.
VIRGINIA BEACH, VA.

As a pediatrician, although I know my patients are “owned” by insurance entities, I still ignore this evil as best I can and treat them as my own clients. If David Goldhill seeks incentives to reduce waste and cost, here are two wee ideas. Find a way to remove the constant fear of lawsuits from medical decision-making; defensive medicine drives excessive testing and treatment. And recognize that after five, seven, or more years of grueling training plus the ultimate responsibility for human lives, primary-care doctors, especially, should not be awarded less than half of what our free-market society pays lawyers and low-level CEOs.

F. RALPH BERBERICH, M.D.
BERKELEY, CALIF.

David Goldhill replies:

I'm happy that my article has stimulated so much discussion. Regarding my proposal to shift health-spending resources and responsibilities to consumers, several readers have contended that we consumers lack the knowledge to make wise or perfect decisions. Of course that's true, but even in our current system, patients are required to make most decisions on care. Doctors advise us, insurance companies can restrict us, but neither can force us to have treatments we don't

accept and order. By shifting resources to the consumer—and putting the government more in the role of consumer advocate/protector—we would give patients better access to necessary information.

Others believe it is unrealistic to expect consumers to shop around for health-care services when they have an urgent medical need. I agree, but such behavior is not essential to the success of a consumer-centered system. Think about most of the products and services we buy: few of us are active, price-comparing, quality-grading consumers. But some of us are, and that puts pressure on vendors across the board to improve the value of their wares. (We all benefit from the low prices at Wal-Mart, whether or not we shop there.) Price transparency would be an essential part of consumer-based reform, and competition among providers for the most discerning patients would drive lower prices and better service for everyone.

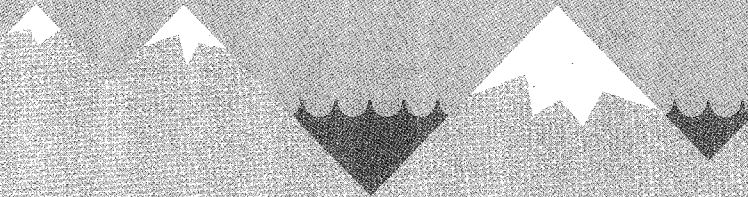
Some respondents are concerned that in my proposed system, consumers would be unable to afford basic care uncovered by catastrophic insurance. But that shouldn't be a problem as long as we move gradually toward this system—decreasing both the coverage offered by insurance (including Medicare) and the premiums we pay. Eliminating employers' share of insurance premiums, Medicare taxes and premiums, and the support for Medicare and Medicaid out of general tax revenues would free up vast financial resources. For example, current government spending on Medicaid and Medicare would fund catastrophic premiums plus a \$2,500 annual health account for 100 million people—a true safety net.

In the end, I favor relying more on consumers/patients because I believe government, employers, and insurers have all clearly failed to control costs and maintain quality. And I believe that at \$2.5 trillion a year, we already spend enough money that a market-disciplined system would meet everyone's health-care needs, and many of our health-care wants.

I agree with the readers who point out that my—or any other truly fundamental—reforms won't happen in this



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political environment. Until the large number of Americans who claim satisfaction with their current insurance realize how much it actually costs them, true reform is unlikely. But even then, we'll need to give up our hope for a quick fix, a magic bullet. It's taken more than half a century to create this mess, and it will take at least a generation to replace it. Whatever we put in its place must be both financially sustainable and flexible enough to allow for the new benefits that ever-innovative health care can provide.

CHILD-FREE LOVE

I was really enjoying Caitlin Flanagan's article "Sex and the Married Man" (September *Atlantic*), right up until the part where she offends every reader who doesn't have children with the sentence "I was years away from having a child of my own, and until you've done that you're just guessing about love, gesturing toward it, assuming that it's the right name for a feeling you've had."

If Flanagan wants to assert that your child-free readers don't understand, empathize with, or experience the full spectrum of the parent-child bond, that's fair. If she herself never really knew love until she became a parent, that's unfortunate, but only she can judge her own experiences. But frankly, this sentence, this attitude, is patronizing and insulting. As a child-free adult, I have plenty of disposable income, and I'm not interested in spending it on publications that insult me for not truly understanding the bonds of love because I am free of the bondage of parenthood.

LISA SANFORD
SHERMAN OAKS, CALIF.

WHAT ABOUT APPLE?

Kevin Maney's article on tech giants ("What Scares Google," September *Atlantic*) fails to mention Apple Inc. Before the rise and fall of Google can be considered, Apple's role as a longtime

contender and current industry leader must be understood.

Apple for a long time played the punchy underdog, keeping the previous Goliaths on their toes. Apple was the first real challenge to IBM's might, with its Apple II and Macintosh computers. As Microsoft took hold of the market in the '90s, Apple found itself unable to break the stride of this new giant. Honing its branding and innovation, Apple unleashed the iMac in 1998. Subsequent strikes from the iPod and iPhone left Apple ready to sunder the enemy. Vista was Microsoft's final attempt to quell Apple, but it proved ineffectual.

Google's strong Web presence and its developing computer and smart-phone operating systems, Chrome OS and Android, respectively, make the company a formidable opponent. With neither Apple nor Google faltering, the conclusion of this struggle remains to be seen.

JOSEPH CONRAN
ALEXANDRIA, VA.

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Kevin Maney replies:

From everything I know, Apple, although terrific at what it does best, has never been a threat to the core business of IBM or of Google. And it challenged Microsoft's core business only in the earliest days of the personal computer, when Apple was actually the dominant company.

THE NATURE OF CONFLICT

As someone who has lived and studied in Kandy, Sri Lanka, I began Robert D. Kaplan's article "Buddha's Savage Peace" (September *Atlantic*) with excitement. Kaplan accurately summarizes the effect that ancient Sri Lankan history has had on the ethnic conflict there. However, by speaking of "a quarter century of civil war between ethnic Sinhalese Buddhists and Hindu Tamils," he miscasts the conflict as religious as

well as ethnic in nature. Although Buddhism has been central to the consolidation of the Sinhalese identity in this conflict, Hinduism has had almost nothing to do with the Tamil approach. Ethnic Tamils include vast numbers of both Christians and Muslims, as well as the "up-country" Tamils who were brought in by the British to harvest tea. These religious identities are not without significance, but they were of little import within the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. Unlike their Sinhalese counterparts, the Tamil Tigers used no religion (not even Hinduism) to attract new recruits. "Recruits" were too often stolen from families, particularly from the eastern province.

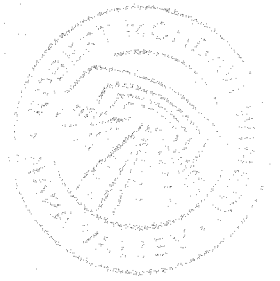
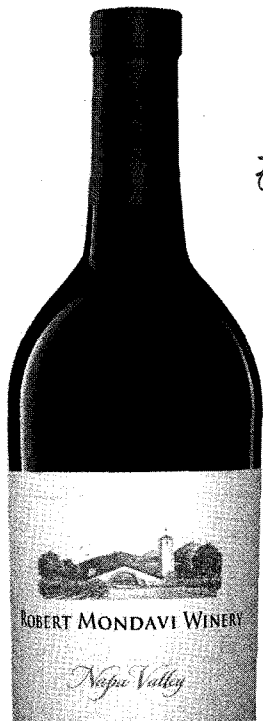
More disturbing yet was how Kaplan missed the opportunity to consider the lessons we might learn from the history of Sri Lanka: how a peaceful Buddhist

country plagued for decades by civil war chose a military solution over a diplomatic one; how the oppressed Tamil minority has been terrorized by its own "resistance movement" (the LTTE); and how Sri Lanka is attempting to deal with the prejudice, hatred, and psychological damage wrought by a decades-old conflict that is now ostensibly over. Whereas few Sinhalese live in the Tamil-dominated north and east of the island, ethnic Tamils and Tamil-speaking peoples live among the Sinhalese all over the island. The importance of this post-war window for real reconciliation cannot be overstated.

TED FRISBIE
CARBONDALE, COLO.

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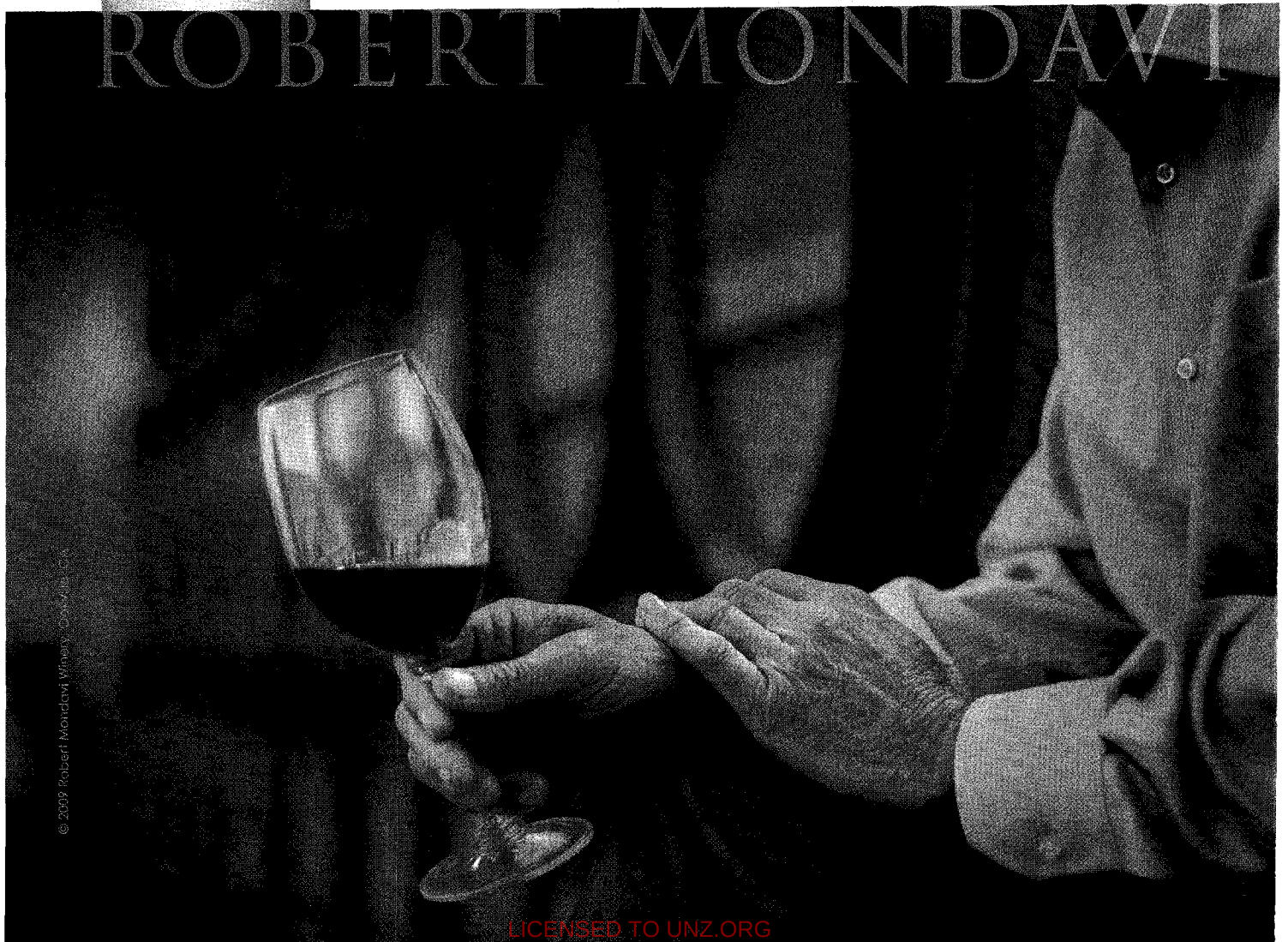


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DISPATCHES

HEALTH *James Fallows wonders how dangerous China's air really is.*

MODERN PLAGUES *Malcolm Gay reports from the front lines of Houston's wild-hog war.*

THE MILITARY *Jeannette Lee visits a tiny island readying itself for invasion.*

ENERGY *Joshua Kucera investigates Greenland's ambitions for an oil-fueled independence.*

GLOBALIZATION *Graeme Wood visits a Lebanese mullah in South America with a taste for Chinese.*

DRINK *Wayne Curtis finds an old explorer's imprint on a modern bar.*

TRAVEL *William Powers reluctantly chills out in Colombia.*

TECHNOLOGY *Jamais Cascio weighs the social risks of knowing it all.*



HEALTH

Survivor: China

OUR MAN IN BEIJING RETURNS HOME, WITH LUNGS ONLY
SOMEWHAT THE WORSE FOR WEAR.

By James Fallows

FOR A WHILE I thought China was killing me. But that was unfair.

Through my wife's and my first year in Shanghai, I felt worse by the day. Tired, achy, surly, weak. And that's not even counting the hospital stay with IV-drip antibiotics, after I naively drank bottled water in a Buddhist-run vegetarian restaurant—and on the way out saw a waiter filling the “Evian” bottles from a hose. Friends we'd known in our pre-China life did pitying double

takes when they came to visit. Surely the ochre skies and suspect sanitation of China were to blame?

Actually, no. On a trip back to America, I learned that I felt sick because I was. Just before moving, I'd apparently developed an odd endocrine disorder that makes people tired, achy, surly, weak. No space for details, but: if your doctor tells you that very high blood-calcium levels may indicate an abnormal parathyroid gland, listen up! On a later U.S.

trip, after we'd moved from Shanghai to Beijing, I had an operation that resolved the problem. I went back to China feeling better than I had in years.

But like most outsiders who have spent time there, I naturally wondered: now that I'd recovered, would smoky urban China start killing me for real? The health situation for ordinary Chinese people is obviously no joke. After stalling, the Chinese government recently accepted a World Bank estimate that some 750,000 of its people die prematurely each year just from air pollution. Alarming upsurges in birth defects and cancer rates are reported even in the state-controlled press.

How long could outsiders live in big, polluted Chinese cities before facing the same actuarial risks as the people who'd

grown up there? Now that foreigners have business, cultural, and sheer-fascination reasons to spend time in China, should those opaque skies scare them away? While we were in China, my wife and I joked with friends that now was the time to take up smoking, since our lungs would never know the difference. After returning to the U.S., I decided to ask doctors and public-health experts how much long-term damage foreigners do themselves in exchange for the experience and opportunity of China. This was no one's idea of a comprehensive survey—and informants still working in China asked me not to use their names—but I was struck by three recurring themes.

The first one was, *It's really bad!* As a foreign-trained doctor in Beijing put it, "Just using your eyes, you know this can't be good for anybody." Another way to know this is via a clandestine air-quality station that the U.S. Embassy has built in Beijing. The Chinese government does not report, and may not even measure, what other countries consider the most dangerous form of air pollution: PM2.5, the smallest particulate matter, tiny enough to work its way deep into the alveoli. Instead, Chinese reports cover only the grosser PM10 particulates, which are less dangerous but more unsightly, because they make the air dark and turn your handkerchief black if you blow your nose. (Spitting on the street: routine in China. Blowing your nose into a handkerchief: something no cultured person would do.) These unauthorized PM2.5 readings, sent out on a Twitter stream (BeijingAir), show the pollution in Beijing routinely to be in the "Very Unhealthy" or "Hazardous" range, not seen in U.S. cities in decades. I've heard from friends about persistent coughs and blood tests that show traces of heavy metals.

"I encourage people with children not to consider extended tours in China," a Western-trained doctor said. "Those little lungs."

But the second theme was, *You get over it.* If anyone has done a systematic study of returned expats or longtime residents to see the health consequences of living in China, no one I spoke with had heard of it. The anecdotal evidence that health experts offered to me suggested that most people bounce back if they return to healthier settings. (Longtime expats: watch out!) There is no folklore of a Chinese burden comparable to Gulf War syndrome or Agent Orange, sickening waves of foreigners long after their in-country exposure. I asked about large companies, universities, and government missions that sent outsiders to China. In each case I heard that a handful of people got sick early and asked to leave, but most grumbled, had respiratory problems—and seemed to be okay later on.

This led to the final message, *Worry about something else!* This had both negative and positive elements. The negative was the reality that the big threat to foreigners was not in the air but on the streets. "I tell my patients, the most important 'medical' step you can take is to put on a seat belt in a car, wear a helmet on a bike, and run for your life in crosswalks," a Chinese doctor said. Road safety is that bad. For the foreign diplomatic corps, the leading cause of death is traffic accidents. I worried every day about being mowed down by a bus, since they don't stop at lights. My wife was run over in Beijing by a motor scooter that was going the opposite way down an eight-lane one-way road and was running a red light too. She's fine now; the driver roared away, still against traffic, as soon as he climbed back on the bike.

The positive aspect is, there's a lot to take your mind off your health. "I am amazed at how well people do here, considering," another Western-trained doctor said. "It is an exciting place. It's a historic time. People seem to feel alive."

That made sense when I heard it—in China I had felt terrible, but *alive*—and makes me say that foreigners who want to go should not be deterred. They could even work on the environmental problems affecting the billion-plus permanent residents. **A**

James Fallows is an Atlantic national correspondent; his blog is at jamesfallows.theatlantic.com.

MODERN PLAGUES

The Boar War

A WILD MENACE
INVADES HOUSTON.

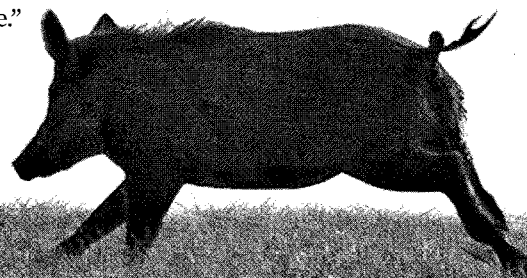
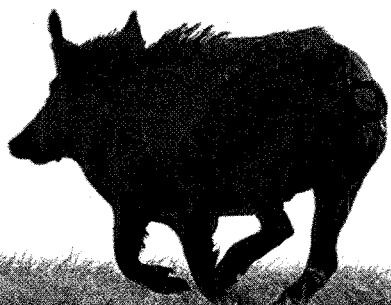
By Malcolm Gay

THE EAST TEXAS SUN had passed its zenith by the time Buck's yap turned insistent. The scent dog had tracked his quarry for several miles that morning without a sound, and his clipped bark now meant only one thing: he had cornered a wild hog in the vine-strewn thicket just behind the subdivision. The other tracking dogs dashed toward him, but Mike Bolen had his doubts: we'd been plying this 2,000-acre swath of land just southwest of Houston for seven hours, and so far we'd seen no sign of wild pigs.

But Buck's yelp didn't falter, and soon Bolen readied his "catch dog," Clifford, a brawny American bulldog mix trained to pin a wild hog by latching on to its ear. We were fast approaching the other dogs when Bolen, hearing the besieged pig, unleashed Clifford and hissed, "Get 'im!"

A lifelong hunter, Bolen discovered the earthy pleasures of "hog doggin'" about 10 years ago. He's since turned his passion into a bit of profit by contracting with Harris County to exterminate feral pigs in and around Houston. And though Bolen's tally of several hundred hogs may sound impressive, it's a small victory in a losing battle.

KENNETH NANNY





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The conquistador Hernando de Soto introduced hogs to North America in 1539; now more than 4 million run wild in at least 39 states, from California to New Jersey. The fiercely intelligent animals are prodigious breeders (a pig population can triple in a year) and will eat everything from acorns and blackberries to sea-turtle eggs and deer fawns. They also spread brucellosis and pseudorabies; destroy cropland, gardens, and golf courses; and foul rivers and streams with their muddy wallows. All told, *Sus scrofa* causes an estimated \$800 million in property damage each year.

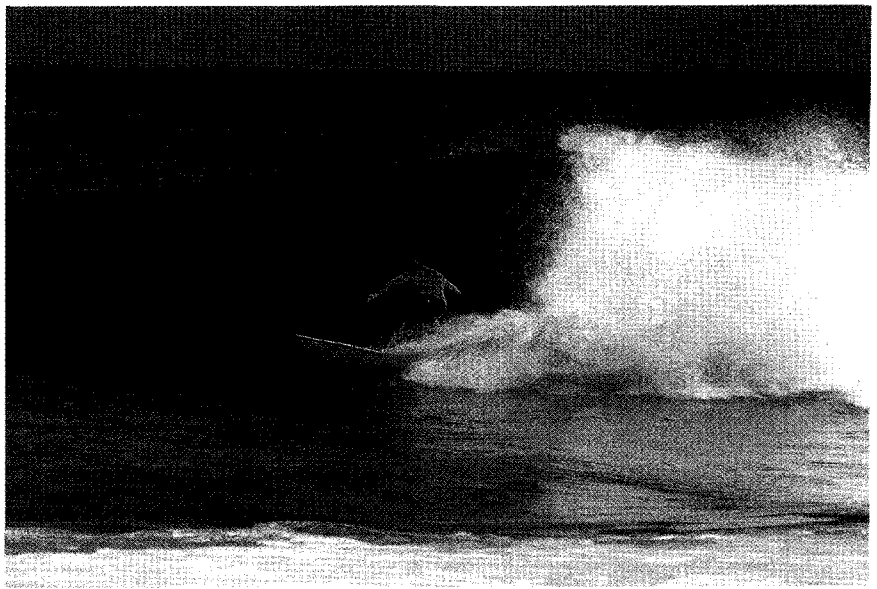
No state is better acquainted with the porcine menace than Texas, where more than 2 million rampaging hogs cost landowners some \$52 million in damages annually, and where lawmakers recently debated a bill that would have allowed private hunters to gun down pigs from the air.

"There are two types of landowners in Texas—those that have hogs, and those that are about to have hogs," says Billy Higginbotham, a wildlife specialist at the Texas AgriLife Extension Service at Texas A&M. "We're not going to eradicate them with current technology."

Researchers are working on pig-specific poisons and immunocontraceptives to sterilize the animals, but such innovations remain on the horizon. In the meantime, officials control the hog population through a strict regimen of trapping and professional aerial-gunning expeditions.

Informally allied with these official efforts are pro-am hog-doggers like Bolen, who insist dogs are the best way to clear pigs from a property. Though the work is unpaid, Bolen's contract allows him to sell up to half of what he catches to processors—who in turn sell the meat overseas as "wild boar"—provided he donates the rest to charity. (A big boar can fetch upwards of \$100.)

Business is brisk, but city hunting has its drawbacks. Many homeowners cringe at the mortal shriek of a captured pig, and Bolen—whose contract requires that he either take hogs live or dispatch them by knife—labors to avoid emerging too bloody from the hunt, a concession to delicate urban sensibilities. Heavy traffic can make it difficult to hear his dogs, and during our first day



When 8,000 more marines arrive on Guam, will locals still be able to catch a break?

in the field someone tried to hot-wire an ATV Bolen had left at the truck.

Still, none of that compares with the difficulty of catching pigs grown wise to the ways of hunting dogs—a struggle on full display as Clifford, fresh off the leash, bore down on the beleaguered pig.

As the bulldog descended, his prey—an outsize boar with a wide "three-finger" hoofprint—sensed its imminent demise, and bolted past Clifford and the trailing pack.

The dogs gave chase, but it was too late: their feet were shot from hours of hunting, and the fresh-legged boar dusted them in a nearby cornfield. ■

Malcolm Gay is a writer living in St. Louis.

THE MILITARY

Wipeout

GUAM'S SURFERS FRET ABOUT THE IMPACT OF A \$15 BILLION DEFENSE BUILDUP ON THEIR ISLAND.

By Jeannette Lee

WILLI C. BYERLY is Guam's unofficial steward of surf. I first encountered the lanky, tanned 57-year-old waterman leaning against a coconut tree, squinting through raindrops at an increasingly crowded break foaming just beyond the jetty of the boat basin downtown in the capital of Hagåtña.

After I introduced myself, he crossed his arms and said, "You're not from *Surfer* magazine, are you? We don't want any pros and their photo shoots around here. There's barely enough waves for the locals." Aside from flat water, nothing peeves Byerly, the head of a local surfer association, more than a mobbed lineup. When I said I'm writing about the U.S. military's plans for the island, he responded, "It's gonna be hell out here. Like too many rats in a cage."

The military is moving ahead with a \$15 billion expansion of its facilities that promises to transform this tiny American territory in the western Pacific. New planes, ships, artillery ranges, and more are all on the way. The most talked-about aspect of what's known as "the buildup" is the pending arrival of 8,000 U.S. marines from Okinawa, Japan. The incoming service members plus their families and the accompanying civilian workforce will swell Guam's population of 170,000 by 15 to 30 percent by 2014.

A local quip holds that the 212-square-mile island is already nothing more than "an oversized aircraft carrier" for the military, which owns a third of Guam. It's no exaggeration to say that every Guamanian either has some military service or has a close friend or relative who does. Of the states and territories, Guam has among the highest per capita participation and death rates

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in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. The eagerness to enlist is partly an extended expression of gratitude to the United States for liberating Guam from a brutal Japanese occupation during World War II. But it also points to a shortage of alternative career paths, and doesn't amount to an unequivocal embrace of all things military.

"These guys are taking jujitsu courses, getting ready to defend their break," Byerly said, jutting his chin at the distant silhouettes on the sea. He suggested I check out the martial-arts gyms to see for myself. As if on cue, the muscled owner of the Purebred Brazilian Jiu Jitsu Academy, Stephen Roberto, rolled up to the beach park in a red pickup. Roberto agreed with Byerly that tension is likely once the additional marines arrive, but overall he's more optimistic.

"The buildup will give Guam more importance in the U.S.'s eyes, bring more jobs, and improve the economy," he said. Roberto's advice to the new marines: "They should come off-base and try to understand the culture. Just don't be the loudest person in the bar."

Guam's politicians, academics, indigenous activists, and even a few business owners share the same concerns about overcrowding and potential lack of respect for the island and its people. Still, many of them are maneuvering for as much federal money as possible. Inside the one-story territorial legislature, about a block from a thriving banana grove, Senator Judith Guthertz, who chairs the buildup committee, laid out her wish list: hundreds of millions in federal funding for upgrades to roads, utilities, schools, and the port; guaranteed employment for locals; assurance that no harm will come to the tourism industry or to Guam's indigenous Chamorro culture; and no incidents that mirror the well-publicized rape of a Japanese schoolgirl by American servicemen on Okinawa. She also wouldn't mind voting powers for the island's lone representative in Congress. "We don't want to be treated like a 21st-century colony," Guthertz told me. "We support the buildup, as long as it's a win-win for Guam and the military."

I asked Byerly if there are any concessions a wave-loving marine could make to avoid a confrontation à la the movie *North Shore*, in which a mainland

surfer clashes with protective locals at Oahu's surf mecca. "If they bring down a case of Bud and grovel a little," he laughed, "that might work." ■

Jeannette Lee is a writer in Washington, D.C.

ENERGY

Oil on Ice

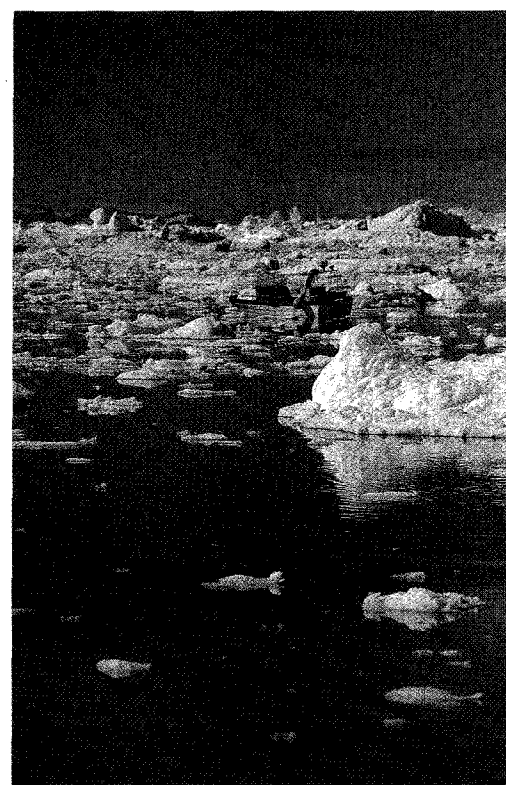
WILL GREENLAND BECOME THE NIGERIA OF THE ARCTIC?

By Joshua Kucera

AQQALUK LYNGE HAS a recurring nightmare: "When I'm lying awake at night, I pray we don't find oil." That anxiety puts Lynge, the president of Greenland's chapter of the Inuit Circumpolar Council, a group representing indigenous people from Greenland, Canada, Alaska, and Russia, in the distinct minority of his 58,000 fellow islanders, most of whom hope that a huge oil find will ensure the success of Greenland's independence from Denmark. Roughly 76 percent of the voters in a referendum last year wanted greater self-rule; on June 21 of this year, they got it.

But as part of that self-rule deal, Denmark will end up reducing its annual subsidy to Greenland—about \$11,000 per person, representing about 60 percent of the island's budget. Hence the high hopes for oil revenue. Some estimates, including those of the U.S. Geological Survey, suggest Greenland's coastal waters could hold anywhere from 16 billion to 47 billion barrels of oil, or 800,000 barrels for every man, woman, and child. That would mean a staggering leap in income for Greenlanders, who until two generations ago were mostly subsistence hunters and fishermen.

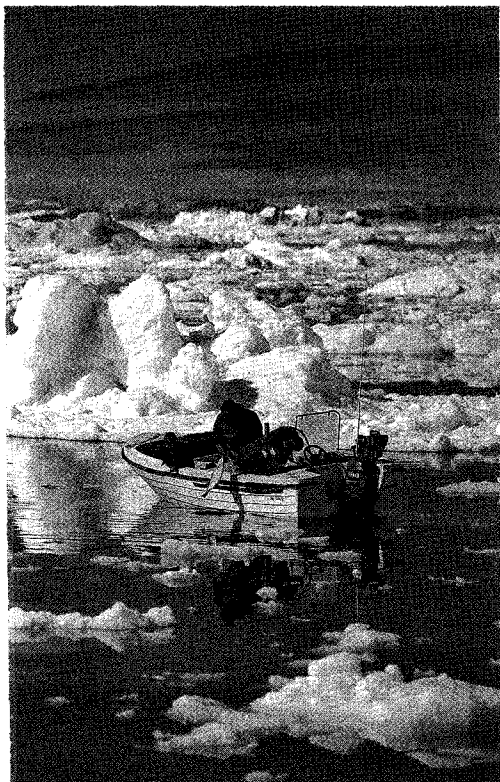
With such massive potential oil reserves, Greenland is poised to achieve a geopolitical importance it hasn't had since the invention of Risk. "We don't want Greenland to be up for grabs," worries Lynge. But oil has yet to actually be discovered, much less to flow, which is why Jens Frederiksen, the leader of Greenland's Democratic Party, spearheaded the "no" campaign during last year's referendum on self-governance. He says the government has too many



pressing social needs—abysmal education levels, a crumbling public-housing stock, and massive rates of alcoholism—to reduce the Danish subsidy, especially since, even if oil is found, any revenue won't start coming in for 15 or 20 years.

Then there's the fear that Greenland could become the Nigeria of the Arctic, another victim of the so-called resource curse, in which oil wealth triggers a downward spiral toward dysfunctional dictatorship. But judging from the offerings at the Greenland Expo, a trade fair held on the eve of Self-Governance Day, risking the curse may be an independent Greenland's best hope for a viable future. Royal Greenland's booth provided mini-mountains of shrimp, of which the company is already one of the world's largest purveyors. But although shrimp are Greenland's greatest source of export revenue, their stocks are on the decline. One company offered bottled water made from Greenland's glacier. (According to the thick market surveys of potential consumers in the U.S. and Japan that it was handing out, "Their primary associations in connection with Greenland for both markets are 'cold' and 'ice.'") And there were skirts made of sharkskin and pants made of sealskin; the latter are illegal in the U.S.,

NARAYAN MAHON



Fish may not be the only treasure in Greenland's waters.

although their maker helpfully advised, "Sometimes people take them in the bottom of their suitcase."

The state oil company, Nunaoil, had one of the largest booths, with an eye-catching flame flaring out of an oil-burning lamp. I asked a company rep manning the booth where the oil was from. "Italy," he laughed. "It's olive oil from the grocery store. We haven't found oil here yet." ■

Joshua Kucera is a writer in Washington, D.C.

GLOBALIZATION

iHola, Hezbollah!

HOW A LEBANESE MULLAH
FOUND HAPPINESS IN PARAGUAY
By Graeme Wood

IN LATE 2007, Sheikh Hassan al-Burji arrived in Ciudad del Este, Paraguay, to become the senior mullah at the Mosque of the Prophet Muhammad. Known to his flock of Lebanese Shiite traders as "Padre," Hassan had spent all of his 28 years growing up in Lebanon and studying in an Iranian seminary. He had never been to South America.

When I met him soon after his arrival, he still looked as wide-eyed as a

freshman at a Vassar orientation, and unsure whether he had chosen wisely by forsaking the gardens of Qom for the buzz of Ciudad del Este. He came partly out of duty: the office of Grand Ayatollah Muhammed Hussein Fadlallah, the spiritual leader of Hezbollah, had asked him to choose between Paraguay and the Côte d'Ivoire. Finding neither option attractive, he opted for the more challenging. The city was then even filthier and more crime-ridden than today—a smugglers' paradise and a border entrepôt for knockoff goods, weapons, and other contraband destined for across the river in Argentina and Brazil—and hardly the natural habitat for a bookish mullah.

"People here think only about money, not about Islam," he complained. Although South America's Shiites are among Hezbollah's biggest donors outside the Middle East, Hassan thought his congregants were all too obsessed with selling mobile phones, and too little devoted to God and prayer. I saw Hassan's thick eyebrows knit in sorrow when he talked about missing his beloved teacher, the exiled Saudi *marjah* Sayyid Munir al-Sayyid 'Adnan al-Khabaz, and I mentally gave him six months, tops, before he fled back to Iran.

I did not count on swine flu, the global economic crisis, or el Padre's discovery of the local Chinese food. Eighteen months after our first meeting, I visited him again. I was shown directly to an upper floor of his apartment building, into the sitting room of a neighboring Lebanese family. They were watching an old World's Strongest Man competition, televised from Anaheim and dubbed in Spanish. As the contestants began picking up Volkswagens, el Padre walked in, and the family switched to the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation.

He greeted me warmly and said life was good: his wife and two children had joined him in February 2008, and when the economy tanked a few months later things started looking up for him. The Lebanese in the Triple Frontier (where Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil meet) make their living buying and selling

cheap bootleg products, and when global demand shriveled, so did their work. Some left for São Paulo, but those who remained had less business. "When a man feels under pressure, he goes toward God," Hassan said. "And now they are under a lot of pressure."

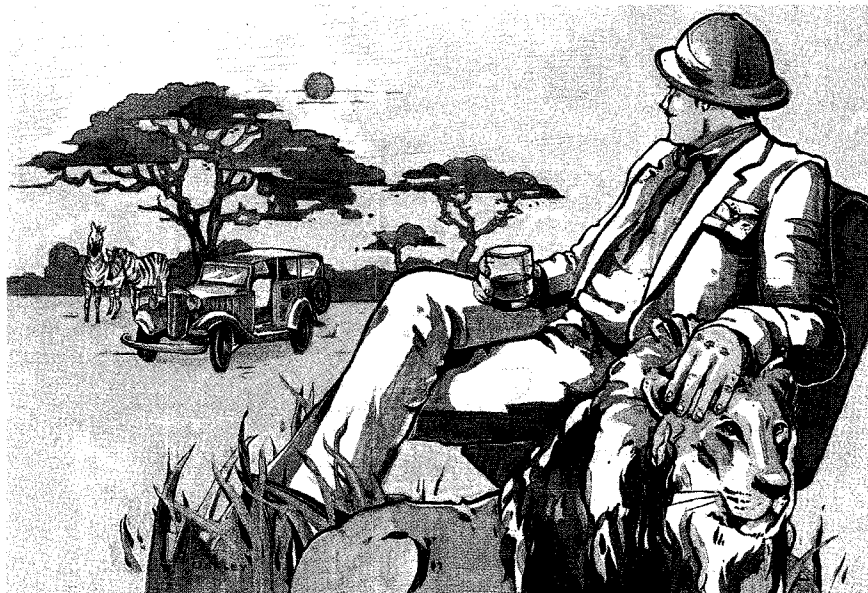
Moreover, Hassan hit his stride. He started a magazine, *Eco de la Mesquita* ("Voice of the Mosque"), which features photographs of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei of Iran, as well cartoons depicting the lives of the prophets. He found a Chinese restaurant that would serve him tasty fish dishes, and his family came to appreciate the earthly conveniences of life in a trading city, such as 24-hour ATMs.

"They like Paraguay more than Iran," he said, and even more than Lebanon. "I would like to live here more time. Here I can read, I can write, and before I did not have any private time." Paraguay had become home. "Now I have my family here and a lot of things to do. I went for 15 days to Lebanon, and I felt like a stranger there." He had peace and space enough to read his religious texts, prepare sermons, and listen to his kids—Sara, 7, and Ja'afar, 5—chirp away in Spanish.

The next day, I attended prayers and his sermon. The signs of Lebanese devotion to commerce were still there. When his congregants prayed, they all carefully took the phones and money and keys out of their pockets and put them on the ground in front of them, so it looked almost as if they were praying to Allah and Nokia in one motion. But their ranks did seem thin, compared with my previous visit.

And Hassan seemed smoother, more comfortable throwing around his gravitas. He lectured on different analyses of the sura of the Koran called Al Zumar, which speaks of the deafening trumpet blast that God will make on Judgment Day, and the lofty riverside mansions the faithful will occupy in heaven. A year and a half earlier, it would have seemed odd to imagine these shopkeepers spellbound by the finer details of textual interpretation. But this day, I saw a captive audience of Muslims with little else to do, and one very happy mullah. ■

Graeme Wood is an Atlantic staff editor.



DRINK

The World on the Rocks

FOR CHARLES H. BAKER OBSESSIVES, THE CONTENTS OF A COCKTAIL ARE LESS COMPELLING THAN THE STORY BEHIND IT.

By Wayne Curtis

ON A RECENT afternoon in Brooklyn, I sat with St. John Frizell, the owner of a new bar called Fort Defiance, and looked over some artifacts from the 1930s—cruise itineraries listing ports of call, magazine travel stories, a brochure titled “Gourmet Guide to Good Living in South America.” People serious about cocktails are often afflicted with one quaint obsession or another, possibly involving vintage shakers or antique bitters. Frizell’s obsession is with a writer named Charles H. Baker Jr., now seldom read, who was born in 1895. Each item on the table was associated with Baker and his global travels, which he always undertook for purposes of research.

Baker was a bon vivant who wrote about food and cocktails for *Esquire*, *Gourmet*, and *Town & Country*. Today, he is best remembered for writing *The Gentleman’s Companion: Being an Exotic Drinking Book or, Around the World With Jigger, Beaker and Flask*, in 1939.

It remains a tour de force. Flipping through its pages is like stepping into a dusky hunting club where the trophy mounts are cocktails such as the Sahara

Glowing Heart and La Zaragozana’s Ne Plus Ultra, and where Baker sits in his cracked leather chair, recounting the story behind each. (Of a cocktail called Between the Sheets, he wrote, “We ran into it one dank day of sleet and rain in early January, just after the first Arab-Jewish riots which started with a murder of a poor old man stoned to death in a Haifa melon patch, between halves of a soccer match.”)

Frizell discovered Baker eight years ago, when he received *The Gentleman’s Companion* as a gift. He was captivated by Baker’s prose, which at times reads as if written by a 19th-century explorer hopelessly lost in the thickets of modern life. Soon after, Frizell quit his job as a marketing writer at *Bon Appétit* and set off with his wife on an eight-month tramp through South America and China, seeking out clubs and bars that Baker had visited seven decades earlier.

The pair did not meet with unalloyed success. In Bolivia, for instance, they made their way through the Andes to a rickety mountaineering clubhouse hanging off a cliff at 15,000 feet, where Baker once drank a Hot Coffee Grog. “They didn’t have any cocktails,

they didn’t have any glasses, they didn’t have any coffee,” Frizell told me. But he and his wife found something even more elusive: a palpable sense of the rakish adventurousness that prevailed between the world wars. “They had a photograph of the founders of the club from the 1930s, posing with a snowman,” Frizell said. “The men were in ties, the women in ski dresses, and it looked like they were having a blast. The world was their oyster.”

In that spirit, Frizell opened Fort Defiance in the Red Hook neighborhood last summer. Despite some Baker ephemera on the walls, it’s not a theme bar; Baker is given a respectful nod rather than a Brooklyn wink. In fact, Fort Defiance seems the antithesis of those retro cocktail lounges that attract blog-obsessed hipsters who, like Bedouins, roll up their tents and leave when something new glints on the horizon. “You ever see *Zorba the Greek*?” Frizell asked. “There’s a scene in the beginning where the main character meets Zorba in a café, waiting for a ferry. It’s the ultimate café. A good bar scene always has a mix from all different walks of life. If everyone’s drinking the same Kool-Aid, it’s really boring.”

The Baker cocktails on the Fort Defiance menu include three worthy of extra attention: the Mexican Firing Squad (a tequila drink from Mexico City), the Colonial Cooler (a gin-and-vermouth concoction from “British North Borneo”), and the Barbados Buck, which, Baker wrote, he discovered one day after “lying naked on a sugarwhite beach, talking about Gilbert & Sullivan.”

I’m a bit disappointed Frizell isn’t serving any of Baker’s nearly unpotable drinks, of which there are quite a few. (One calls for gin, sweet vermouth, pineapple syrup, grenadine, lemon juice, heavy cream, and an egg white.) I suspect Baker included these in his collections by sly design—true adventure, after all, means occasionally encountering a churlish viper or the chance monsoon before sipping a julep on the veranda of a Tahitian vanilla plantation. Cocktails shouldn’t always strive for perfection in a glass. Sometimes they should be way markers on the route to someplace more interesting. ■

Wayne Curtis is an Atlantic contributing editor.

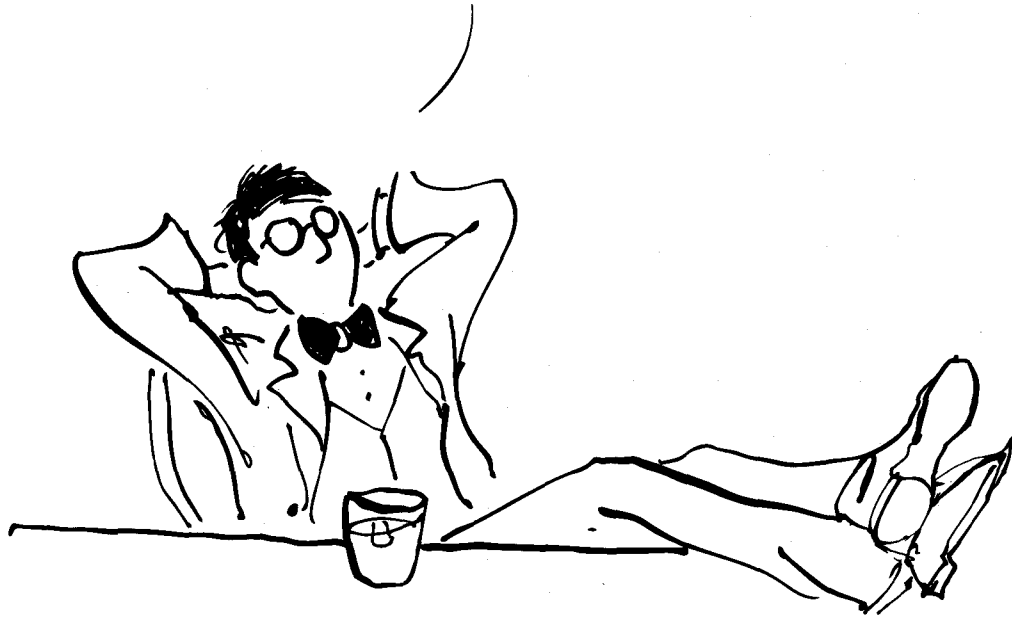
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TRAVEL

Finding Peace in Colombia

A THRILL SEEKER SURRENDERS TO SOUTH AMERICA'S SCARIEST NATION.

By William Powers

I ENJOY A BIT of adrenaline when I travel. I've paraglided off Andean cliffs and tracked forest elephants in wartime Liberia.

So why not take a vacation in Colombia? My imagination awash with stereotypes—drug lord Pablo Escobar's Medellín cartel assassinating politicians, Marxist FARC guerrillas kidnapping tourists—I booked my flight to Bogotá, heart pumping.

But Bogotá didn't square with my stereotypes. Unbeknownst to me, this cosmopolitan city of 7 million had been dubbed the Athens of South America, because it's full of libraries, museums (more than 40 of them), and universities. I strolled past the city's oldest intellectual relic—Saint Thomas University, founded by Dominicans in 1580—and

then through the majestic Plaza Bolívar, where I met up with my Colombian friend Martha, a biologist.

We talked about Colombia's big news: how much safer it has become for visitors over the years. It was once known as the kidnapping capital of the world, but the numbers have dwindled—from a peak of 3,572 in 2000 across the country to 437 last year. (Don't get me wrong: murder rates are still high, and urban violence may be on the rise, but that can be said about other worthy destinations, too.)

So, frustrated that Bogotá was a little too *tranquila* for me, I took a three-day road trip with Martha across the Boyacá province, where the FARC are said to control certain hilltops. That may be true, but the lowland roads are more

secure. President Álvaro Uribe has militarized many of the country's highways, making travel safer now than it's been for decades. It is still possible to get robbed on these roads, but we didn't see so much as a hitchhiker. Singing along with Shakira on the car radio, we waved to roadside soldiers. We toured a salt church, backstroked in a teal-blue lake, and feasted on a *fritanga* barbecue in the cobbled streets of Villa de Leyva.

Still itching for excitement, I hopped a cheap Avianca flight to swashbuckling Cartagena, historically a thug's mecca where pirates laid siege. I toured the Palace of the Inquisition, where tribunals had once condemned 800 people to death for blasphemy and witchcraft. Its creepy museum displays the torture devices used on the heretics.

Outside, the Caribbean shimmered serenely beyond stone city walls. I heard the clicking of horseshoes, and spotted a *cabalgata* of hundreds of equestrians riding Old World style, bougainvillea vines spilling down from balconies above

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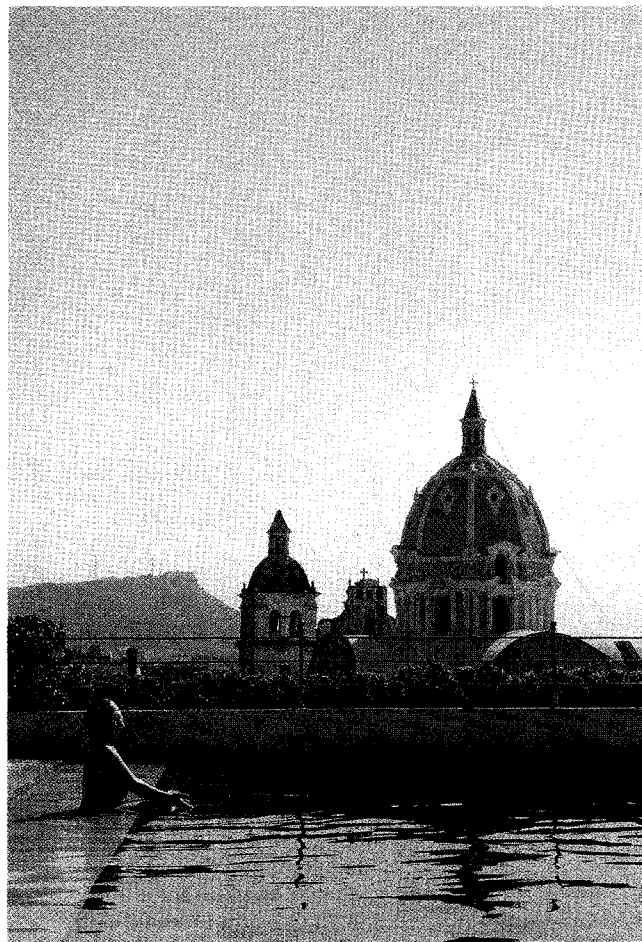
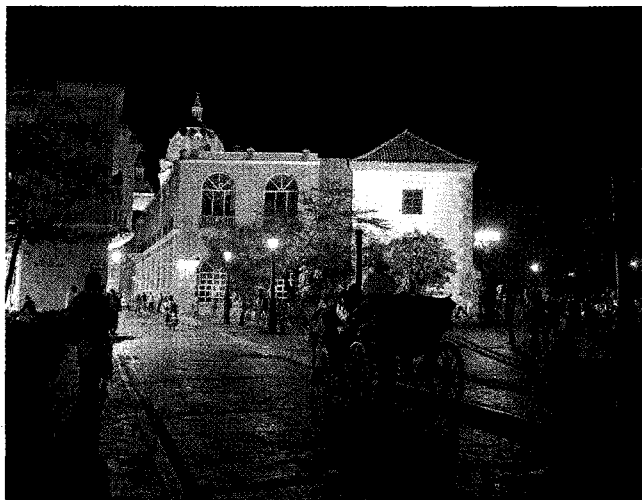


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Cartagena: evening carriage rides through the Ciudad Vieja, hotels with rooftop pools, and plazas full of restaurants and shops

them. Walking past the house of Colombia's chief reporter of magical realism, Gabriel García Márquez, I noticed a subtle sea breeze and felt as safe as I ever had in Latin America.

That simply wouldn't do. I got what seemed like a good tip at Cartagena's annual Hay Literary Festival. While I talked Borges and Bolaño with other festival attendees over mojitos, a tipsy Colombian poet shouldered his way into the conversation and declared Colombia's little-known Rosario Islands to be "swarming with narco-terrorists."

The next morning I hopped the first boat to the islands and found lodging in a small hotel run by a Norwegian named Finn. He cooked scrumptious seafood, which I ate when I wasn't snorkeling the islands' turquoise waters. Over lobster, another traveler, a social worker from San Francisco, asked Finn if he ever felt unsafe in Colombia.

Finn drained a glass of rum, his big belly folding over Hawaiian shorts, and recited a Colombian tourism slogan:

"The only risk is wanting to stay."

Finn might have felt groovy, but I did not. I was so relaxed that my pulse had almost stopped. So I hightailed it back to the mainland and took a bus into a paramilitary narco-zone in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. The B movie they showed on the bus boded well. The plot: a bus is stopped by guerrillas and the passengers are taken hostage.

After an uneventful passage, I got off the bus and hitched a ride in a pickup truck, deep into the hills. I'd heard on the bus that there "might be a hovel" up there that would do for lodging. Another pickup passed ours. It was packed with paramilitary fighters. One of them laid a chilling stare on me.

I braced myself and delivered my best "Wassup?" nod. He tightened his jaw. I shuddered with fear, and delight.

Then I saw my hovel. It was a kind of eco-resort. The owners, a Colombian-and-Belgian couple, optimistic about Colombia's ever-brighter future, had recently opened the hotel. I was the sole

guest; my room perched over a private swimming pool, waterfalls crashing out of the jungle around it.

While exploring barely excavated Tayrona Indian roads, I stumbled upon a muscular, 20-something Canadian harvesting cacao with organic aplomb. Why had he chosen Colombia for his off-the-grid dream? "Because it's so peaceful."

When I met his neighbor—an Irish Buddhist—I realized I'd journeyed to the polar opposite of my expectations. Instead of Escobar, I'd found Sidhartha. The Irish Buddhist invited me to meditate with him next to his creek-side hut. I reluctantly pretzeled my legs into a half lotus. I'd come for blood, not bliss. But when a scarlet ibis swooped overhead and landed on a strangler fig across the brook, I sighed, chanted "Om," and surrendered to the enigma of Colombia. ■

William Powers's most recent book is Whispering in the Giant's Ear: A Frontline Chronicle From Bolivia's War on Globalization.

ANDREA BAKACS

How to Become in 6 Million Sim

1. Get out of the

2. Stand tall



3. Grow big

4. Scratch vigorously

5. Shed



6. Flee animals



7. Chase animals

See how
about

8. Make tools





TECHNOLOGY

Seeing Too Much

HOW THE ADVENT OF "AUGMENTED REALITY" THREATENS CIVILITY

By Jamais Cascio

HERE'S A STARTLING vision for the next decade: two familiar online phenomena converge in an emerging technological arena to strike a fatal blow to American civil society.

The emerging technology, called "Augmented Reality," enables users to see location-specific data superimposed over their surroundings. Long a staple of science fiction, it's trickling into the real world through the iPhone and similar ultrasmart mobile phones. With AR applications such as Layar, the smart phone displays what its camera sees, with information about nearby buildings and shops, travel directions, even notes and "tags" left by other users in that location. Although AR now relies on handheld devices, electronics makers like Sony are working on systems that you wear like sunglasses, making augmented vision more immersive.

Here's where the first familiar online phenomenon shows up: spam. Nearly every communication method we invent eventually conveys unwanted commercial messages. AR systems will be used for spam too, whether via graffiti-like tags, ads that pop up when you look too long at a shop, or even abstract symbols stuck to a wall or worn on a shirt that, when viewed through an AR system, turn into 3-D animations.

Fortunately, just as Web browsers have pop-up blockers, AR systems will filter spam. Moreover, they'll likely be able to filter out *physical* ads, too, such as billboards—a capability that many opponents of visual clutter will find deliriously attractive.

This technology will have plenty of social uses, of course. Facial-recognition technology is improving, and would be a welcome addition to a personal AR system. Imagine never forgetting a face, and always being able to recognize a friend-of-a-friend on the street. And because the systems are linked to the Internet, once AR recognized someone, you could easily pull up his or her online footprint, such as a Facebook page.

This brings us to the second familiar online phenomenon: political polarization. On the Internet, the stark division between Red America and Blue America is reflected in the political information each side chooses to consume. The social-network analyst Valdis Krebs discovered that people who buy political books on Amazon.com cluster into divergent camps, with little overlap in the books they read. That dynamic also applies to political blogs and news sites.

Conceivably, users could set AR spam filters to block any kind of unpalatable visual information, from political

campaign signs to book covers. Parents might want to block sexual or violent images from their kids' AR systems, and political activists and religious leaders might provide ideologically correct filters for their communities. The bad images get replaced by a red STOP, or perhaps by signs and pictures that reinforce the desired worldview.

Did I mention that the "wrong" people can get replaced too?

After California's Prop 8 ban on gay marriage passed, opponents of the measure dug up public records of donors supporting the ban, and linked that data to an online map. Suddenly, you could find out which of your neighbors (or the businesses you frequent) were so opposed to gay marriage that they donated to the cause. Now imagine that instead of a map, those records were combined with an AR system able to identify faces.

You don't want to see anybody who has donated to the Palin 2012 campaign? Gone, their faces covered up by black circles. You want to know who exactly gave money to the 2014 ban on SUVs? Easy—they now have green arrows pointing at their heads.

You want to block out any indication of viewpoints other than your own? Done.

This will not be a world conducive to political moderation, nor one where differing perspectives get along comfortably. It won't take a majority of people using these filters to poison public discourse; imagine this summer's town-hall screamers on constant alert, wherever they go. Yet this world will be the unintended consequence of otherwise desirable developments—spam filters, facial recognition, augmented reality—that many of us will find useful.

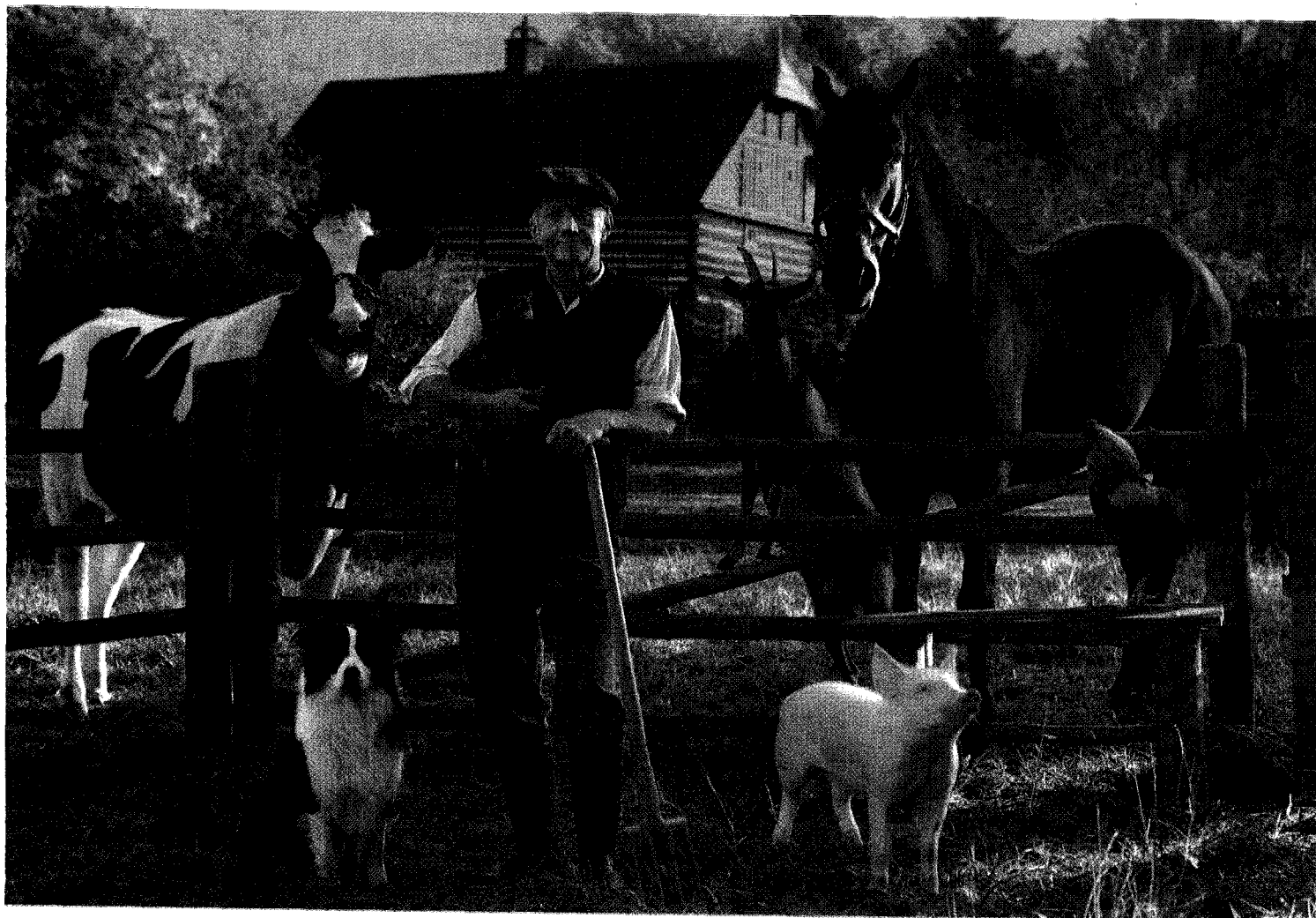
The knee-jerk answer would be to ban such reality filters, but a ban could be easily circumvented. The harder answer, but ultimately the correct one, would be to strengthen our society's ability to tolerate diverse viewpoints—to encourage not muddy centrism, but a basic ability to hear out, and to see, fellow citizens with a measure of respect. ■

Jamais Cascio is an affiliate at the Institute for the Future and a senior fellow at the Institute for Ethics and Emerging Technologies.

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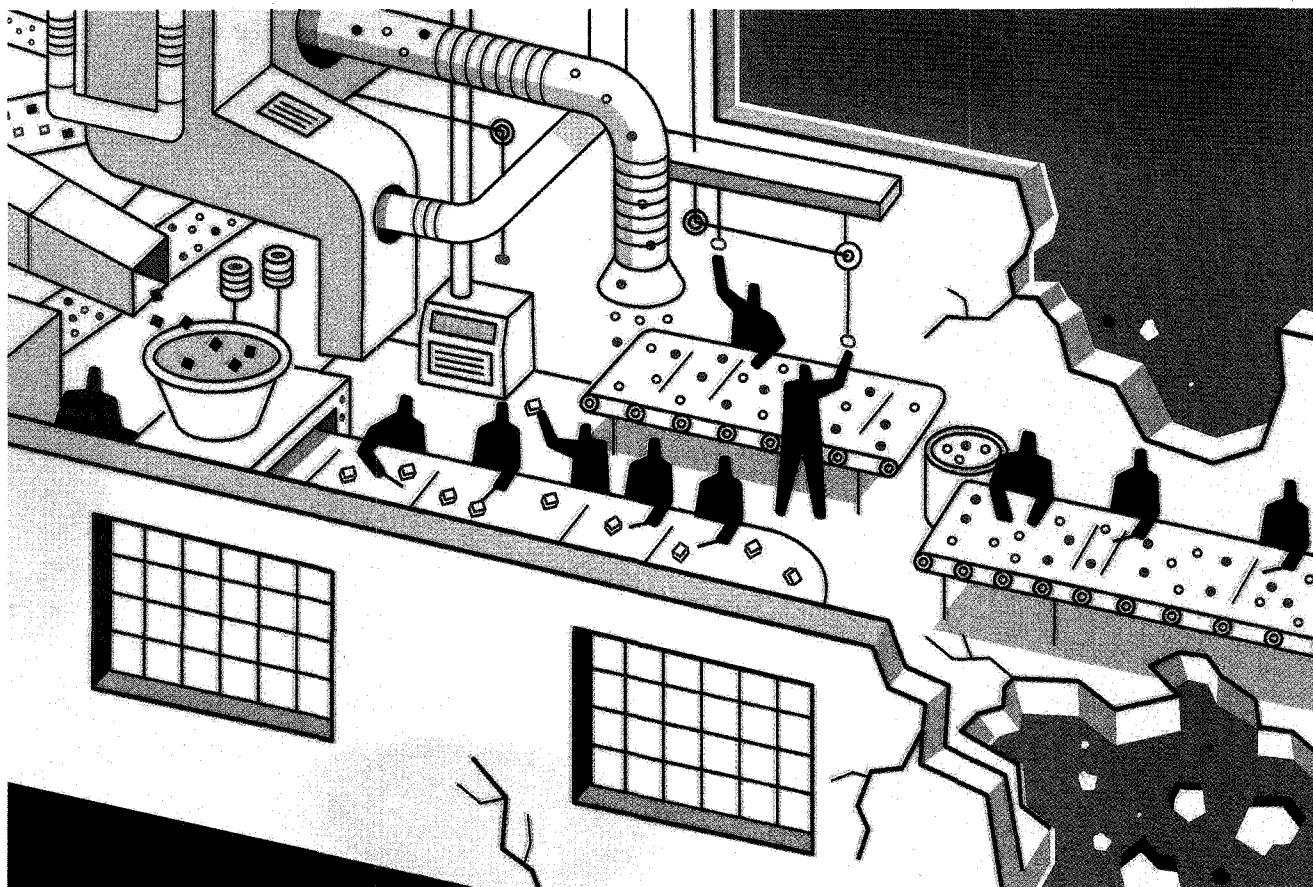


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Misleading Indicator

Will the Great Recession finally end our misguided obsession with gross domestic product?

By Megan McArdle

HERE'S A QUESTION no one ever asks about the Great Recession: How do we even know it's happening? Daily, almost, someone releases employment figures, production estimates, consumer-confidence indexes—almost all of them bad. There's no need to wonder what's happening when information about everyone's problems constantly streams across your TV screen.

And in this dolorous statistical parade, no number is quite so central to public life as the gross domestic product. Political scientists build formulas around it to predict who will win the

presidency. The stock market trembles at the approach of new quarterly figures. Other economic statistics, like budget deficits or health-care spending, are quoted as percentages of GDP. It has become the common denominator of economic well-being.

But GDP's broad dominion has long had its critics. It was never meant to be the measure of our well-being, they say, only the measure of our production—literally, the total value of the goods and services produced within the national borders in a given year. While the quest for some broader measure of progress has been going on for a while (more than a decade ago, for example, *The*

Atlantic was running articles like “If the GDP Is Up, Why Is America Down?”), it may finally be gaining traction at a time when people understand, as never before, how easily GDP and well-being can diverge.

One of the leaders of a huge global effort to build a better statistical yardstick has been Enrico Giovannini, until recently the chief statistician of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Though the OECD is the global coordinator of the project, its partners represent a who's who of economic development: the World Bank, various UN programs, the African Development Bank, and the

HARRY CAMPBELL

European Commission. They are looking to create more-reliable metrics for measuring change in our health, education, the environment—the many ways that human beings make themselves better off or worse off. This fall, in the wake of the OECD's third World Forum on Statistics, Knowledge, and Policy, these groups are set to move ahead on a broader, better set of indexes.

Crisis seems to be the mother of statistics. The germ of the idea that eventually became GDP emerged after World War I, when American economists who had been frustrated by the lack of reliable statistics to guide war production founded the National Bureau of Economic Research (despite its name, the NBER is a private organization). Still, not until the Great Depression did we finally get our first national income accounts, which measured the annual income of people, companies, and the government.

It is rare for people to write about that era without taking a swipe at Herbert Hoover, but we might be kinder if we remembered just how little information he had. With no national income accounts, Hoover had to rely on fragmentary indicators such as freight-car loadings, steel production, and the gyrations of the New York Stock Exchange. There weren't even comprehensive national unemployment statistics, because Congress didn't authorize the Department of Labor to collect them until the middle of 1930. Forget Hoover's economic theory, most of which was pretty bad; the man barely had any *data*.

Beyond newspaper anecdotes and a bunch of unrelated industrial indexes, he had little way of knowing just how awful things were or, more important, exactly where intervention might be needed. It's as if someone hired you to cater a lavish formal dinner—then gave you no head count, a partial list of available ingredients, and the July 1953 issue of *Gourmet* magazine to work with.

That started to change in 1932. The legendary progressive Senator Robert La Follette introduced a resolution that directed the secretary of commerce to estimate national income for the prior three years. Unable to find anyone in the department who was up to the task, Commerce hired Simon Kuznets, who had already begun working on

the problem at the NBER. He spent the next 14 years creating a system of national accounts that, with constant refinements and additions, we still use today.

It's almost impossible to overstate what a titanic achievement this was. But here's something that hints at the magnitude of the difficulties: despite his earlier work, Kuznets didn't make the first tentative presentation of his figures to Congress until 1934. By 1941, he had expanded the series backward to 1919, and all the way to 1938. Measures of output—the true forerunners of GDP—didn't follow until 1942, as war production ramped up. (Total mobilization depended on extensive statistics, which is why the Nobel Prize winner Paul Samuelson called World War II “an economist's war.”) The Great Depression and World War II created the modern world in a lot of ways. They also created one of the primary lenses through which we view it.

Unfortunately, that lens is a trifle distorted. It counts the dollar value of our output, but not the actual improvement in our lives, or even in our economic condition.

Think about a house, any of the millions that were constructed during the bubble that burst in 2008. Let's make it a nice house: four bedrooms, 3.5 baths, with an attached garage and a quarter-acre lot. During its construction, that house did its own little bit to boost GDP. Lumber was purchased and swathed in fluttering robes of Tyvek. Tiles were pressed out of clay and nailed to the roof. Pipe was laid, glass was sealed into the window slots, granite was hewn from a Vermont mountain and shipped all the way to its kitchen counters. All of this output, which swelled GDP (at least to the tune of its purchase price), has ended up in ... nothing. The house, in an ex-urban cul-de-sac, sits empty while bankers, borrowers, and regulators squabble. One of the estimated 2.4 million excess homes on the market, its only function right now is to bankrupt its owner.

GDP does not, and cannot, reflect the waste of enormous effort, and precious natural resources, that went into building something that suddenly no one wants. Moreover, it misses many other aspects of our existence. Strip-mining a picturesque mountaintop, or clear-cutting a primeval forest, shows up in GDP

only as a boost to output. Meanwhile, in India's national accounts, all of Mother Teresa's labors among the poor would have had only the most minimal possible impact. GDP can record how much money we spend on health care or education; it cannot tell us whether the services we are buying are any good.

Consider the housewife, or rather, her modern successor, the stay-at-home mom. There's

evidence that the recession may have forced her back onto the job market. Since the downturn, the labor-force participation rate for working-age men has fallen significantly. But the participation rate of women has actually ticked up. The most likely explanation is that women whose husbands have been laid off or had their income cut are going back into the workplace (at least temporarily) to help make ends meet.

Some feminists might rejoice, but to an economist, or a social conservative, this development is almost certainly a bad thing. Assuming that she and her family both wanted her to stay home, each woman who leaves for the office out of economic necessity represents a loss to the country, a loss of what economists call utility and what we may think of as net national happiness.

As she heads back to the workplace, that mother will be boosting GDP. If her husband has lost not his job but merely some income from sales commissions or a business, she will probably have to pay for child care. She may need to buy new work clothes. Money will be spent on commuting, and the family will probably shift away from homemade meals to costlier prepared foods that save time. All of these transactions further swell the national income accounts.

The Great Depression and World War II created the modern world in a lot of ways. They also created one of the primary lenses through which we view it.

Yet all of them also represent a decrease in life satisfaction.

These are but some of the reasons why analysts on the left and right think we need a better measure of national welfare than GDP. But if Kuznets had a hard time figuring out how to measure all the transactions in our marketplace, how much harder will it be for his multilateral successors to put a number on the things we often call priceless?

There are, broadly speaking, three ways you can try to build a "well-being" index. You can use what economists call "shadow prices," imputing dollar values to the various things that contribute to our quality of life. But the index usually ends up being incredibly sensitive to your starting

assumptions. As the economist Tyler Cowen says, "How much is a fish worth? .000000000000001 cents per fish or .00000000000000000000000000000001 cents per fish? It makes a big difference!" He wryly adds, "The point of a GDP statistic is to drain away those sorts of problems. The point is not to commit you to an anti-fish position."

The second approach is to attach weights to various indicators and use them to build a composite gauge like the Human Development Index. Unfortunately, the weights will always be somewhat arbitrary. That inherent subjectivity makes the accuracy of your index somewhat suspect, and leaves the people who created it open to accusations of bias.

Take the World Health Organization's infamous ranking of national health systems, which in 2000 put the United States below such health-care luminaries as Oman, Colombia, and Morocco. Would you really rather get sick in Bogotá than in Berkeley? The WHO analysts heavily weighted somewhat murky estimates like equality of access, knocking us down to two places above Cuba, where antibiotics are scarce for everybody. This is so bizarre that conservatives don't sound entirely

crazy when they voice suspicions that the WHO chose its weights to produce just this result. The WHO has since stopped publishing the index.

When all else fails, of course, you can just ask people: Are you better off now than you were three years ago? Even this approach poses problems. As any marketing expert can tell you, the difference

between what people say they want, and what they actually want, can be large. Their memories of years past are quite poor, and often highly selective. Survey respondents are vulnerable to all sorts of influences, from how the question is framed to a desire to impress the interviewers. That's why polls often find substantial majorities against raising taxes and against cutting any major programs—and

for reducing the deficit. Surveys also show that heterosexual men on average have many more sexual partners than heterosexual women do, which is mathematically impossible.

Besides, much of the progress in important areas of life is invisible to most people. You are indisputably better off having the option of getting a liver transplant if you should need one. But unless your skin actually starts turning yellow, you probably never think about it.

The OECD project's daunting task is to find better ways to handle these kinds of obstacles. One possible approach is to focus on hard indicators that we can measure in a fairly standard way. But these are scarce for some aspects of life, and even when they exist, can be tricky to interpret. Life expectancy, for example, seems pretty objective. It's a metric on which the United States does relatively poorly, causing us endless consternation. A few years ago, however, the health-care economists Robert Ohsfeldt and John Schneider recalculated the numbers after controlling for deaths from homicides and traffic accidents. Because these things tend to strike very young people, they can have an outsize impact on mortality statistics. Those deaths reflect America's

crime policy and its driving habits more than the effectiveness of its health-care system. And if you remove them from the picture, say Ohsfeldt and Schneider, America jumps to the top of the life-expectancy tables. Assuming they're correct, does America have good health, or bad? Neither answer is the obviously right one. Such conundrums will vex analysts long into the future.

But of course, measurement problems also bedevil GDP, which is why the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis employs economists and statisticians rather than bookkeepers. Whatever the difficulties, the OECD project's leaders, like their forebears during the Great Depression, are convinced of the urgent need to get a better handle on the progress our societies are making.

That sense of urgency doesn't mean we should look for speedy results. Even though his staff had to tabulate the results without the aid of computers, Kuznets and his team produced the first national accounts more rapidly than his successors will create the newer, better set of statistics they aspire to. For all the burdens under which Kuznets labored, he had one advantage: the absence of an existing economic establishment. He did not have to convene working groups and seminars to make sure that academics around the world and the staffs of dozens of institutions felt included. Nor, once he was finished, did he have to convince governments that they should care. Giovannini describes today's next step as developing "a framework that at least lists the domains that outline what this project should look like." That's several nouns away from any sort of working model.

It doesn't help that Giovannini has left the OECD to head Italy's statistics authority. But efforts like these have always been larger than one person. When our grandchildren face their financial Waterloo, they may have Giovannini's brainchildren to help guide them through it. But we will have to muddle through with the legacy of Kuznets and the generations of economists who expanded and improved on his remarkable achievement. ■

Megan McArdle is The Atlantic's business and economics editor, and the editor of the business channel at theatlantic.com.

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Retching With the Stars

The addictive appeal of Dr. Drew Pinsky's *Celebrity Rehab*

By James Parker

AT THE MONUMENT to the Last Postmodern Philosopher, who was assumed into heaven after watching Season One of *Laguna Beach*, the celebrities are gathering to pay tribute: lumbering Donald Trump, with his volume always set wrong; tiny-footed Tila Tequila. There's Paris Hilton, sleek as a seal; and ... a cartwheeling Flavor Flav!

Applause greets them all, and shouted questions, the usual brouhaha. With the arrival of one man, however, a fresh note is heard from the crowd—a note of supplication. Hands are out-thrust, seeking the curative touch. Here, the people seem to feel, is someone with answers, someone with *powers*. Who is he, this smiling thaumaturge? We must investigate. For despite his mildness and evident sanity, and his perpetual

bedside manner, reality TV has in its long roster of loonies produced no more exotic figure than Dr. Drew Pinsky.

Dr. Drew is the service director of the Chemical Dependency/Residential Treatment Center at Las Encinas Hospital in Pasadena, California. He is a board-certified internist and addictionologist, 51 years old, tall, neutrally handsome, and fit as a fiddle. His voice is even, his face without pores, and

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when he tilts his head his semi-frameless glasses catch the light like faraway windshields. He favors khaki slacks, light-mauve or powder-blue shirts, and nice ties. For 25 years he has hosted the nationally syndicated radio show *Love-line*—toneless voices of teens, some of whom can barely phrase their distress, calling in with misunderstood gayness or drug queries or parent problems or never-ending boners, each issue calmly and compassionately addressed in the Pinsky baritone.

This is the youth of the nation, and Dr. Drew is listening. In his 2003 book, *Cracked: Life on the Edge in a Rehab Clinic*, he decried the “orgiastic mythos of sex, mayhem and cool clothes” whipped up by “the most successful creative figures in our culture, from the producers of reality TV to the editors of *Maxim*,” and outlined his basic message to today’s kids:

Life isn’t all about fun and sex ... Slow down. Listen to your inner voice when it comes to right and wrong. Think for yourself. Be more human.

Mental health, he wrote in *Cracked*, “is about accepting reality on reality’s terms.”

All of which, one might think, would tend to make his next move—a VH1 reality show called *Celebrity Rehab With Dr. Drew*—something of a surprise. But no: just part of the program. Appalled by *The Osbournes* and *The Anna Nicole Show*, wherein (as he wrote in this year’s *The Mirror Effect: How Celebrity Narcissism Is Seducing America*) the loopiness of the subjects was paraded “without acknowledging all the circumstances underlying their dysfunction,” Dr. Drew decided upon a cultural intervention: a show in which addicted celebrities would weep, puke, “act out,” shudder sweatily through days of withdrawal, and then, in harrowed sobriety, face the music. As he is fond of saying: “There’s no free lunch with Mother Nature!”

Dr. Drew decided upon a cultural intervention: a show in which addicted celebrities would weep, puke, shudder sweatily through withdrawal, and then face the music.

Twenty-one days of treatment at the Pasadena Recovery Center, under Dr. Drew’s supervision, with a camera crew present: that’s the formula. And as far as ratings go, it seems to be working: a third season is in production, to be aired in early 2010. The lineup changes, of course. If the cast of Season One—a porn star, an Ultimate Fighter, a Baldwin brother, Brigitte Nielsen—resembled a colonization pod en route to the surface of a freshly invaded planet, Season Two’s addicts were more disarming. We met gentle Rodney King, infamously beaten by the LAPD in 1991 and still prone to demolishing himself with intoxicants; Steven Adler, leakily lovable, ejected from the Guns N’ Roses drum stool

and having sad dreams that someone was kicking his dog; and Sean Stewart, troubled son of Rod.

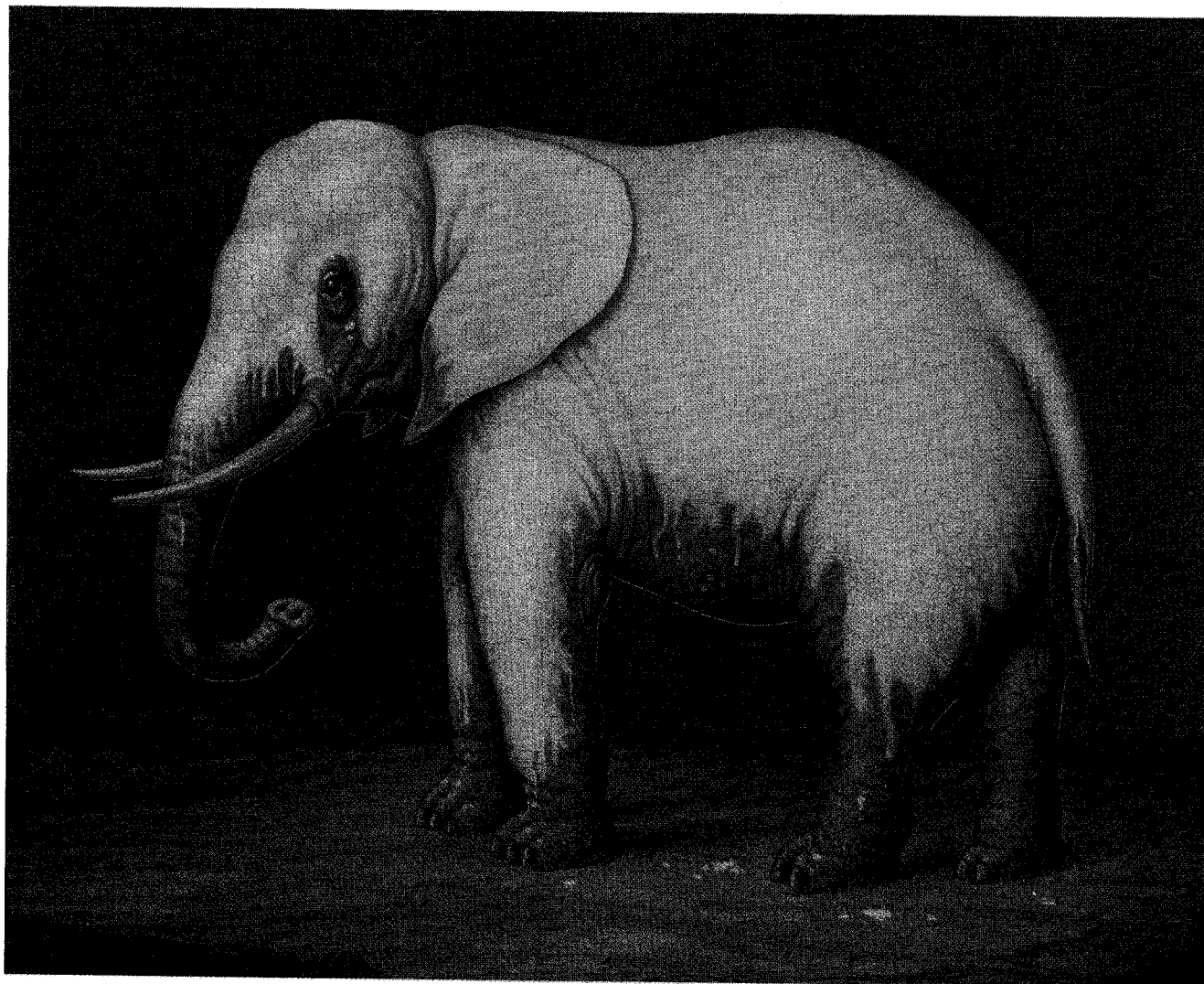
The rehab vibe, however, the smell of generalized debility, is a constant. Peering from beneath hoods, wearing sweatpants, clutching blankets, huddling sideways in their chairs as if centrifugally dislodged from their own lives, the celebs tell their stories at group sessions. The stories, of abuse and neglect, are very sad: sometimes Dr. Drew is literally panting with empathy. Then after each session, in the facility’s little Californian back garden, they sit amid lush, dark leaves and smoke like chimneys, if such furrowed, ritualistic intensity can be attributed to chimneys. And they fall to pieces, punctually. Amber Smith, a stately beauty from Season Two, seemed more or less unaffected until we saw her going through detox—jackknifed over the trash can and probing her epiglottis with a long finger. Season Three will feature Heidi Fleiss, Dennis Rodman, and the ex-bassist from Alice in Chains.

My favorite addict so far? Gary Bussey, by a mile. “The Businator,” as his fellow patients called him—or, when he’d pissed them off, “Dr. Abusey.” With bull-at-the-gate physical presence,

a born-again ex-cokehead blowing hoarse gusts of religion (“I speak from a spiritual land that I live in!”), Bussey on *Celebrity Rehab* seemed to rise in slashes of charcoal and orange crayon from the pages of Flannery O’Connor, twice as potent as the characters he played in *Point Break* and *The Firm*. He spoke in parables and the personalized acronyms he calls “Bussey-isms”—SOBER, for example, breaks down Bussey-style as “Son Of a Bitch, Everything’s Real!” (Sean Stewart inquired at one point if there was a Bussey-ism for *colonoscopy*. “Not yet,” replied Bussey, “but I got one for *poop*.”) He got into an awful fight with Jeff Conaway (Kenickie in *Grease*; painkillers), after which he promised, before the group, to pray for him. “Oh, shove it up your ass!” said Conaway. “Everybody knows you’re crazy.” Later, in the garden, the two old troupers had a rapprochement. “I know you love me,” grumbled Conaway. “One hundred and fifty percent,” breathed Bussey. “My love for you lives 5,000 miles past heaven.” Conaway looked at him: “If it just stopped at heaven,” he said, “that’s enough for me.” The Businator’s mental “filter” was damaged in a motorcycle accident he suffered in 1988—or so suggested Dr. Charles Sophy, a colleague of Dr. Drew’s who appeared in Season Two wearing no socks. (I found this remarkable in a medical man: between trouser hem and refulgent loafer, a gleam of bronzed ankle.)

As a healer, Dr. Drew is fascinating. On the surface his approach is scientific and slightly Dawkins-oid: in *Cracked* he briskly locates the source of addiction in “a tiny region of the brain called the nucleus accumbens,” and suggests that the emotional dissociation of the trauma victim is “an evolutionary remnant of the risky strategy of feigning death.”

But go below, and you’ll feel the cunning of the rural exorcist. Drugs are presences (“I like them,” says a patient. “They like you,” Dr. Drew tartly reminds him), and addiction is a demon. That’s your disease talking, he tells patients; that’s your addiction talking. Your disease is waiting for you to slip up. If I could script one scene for *Celebrity Rehab*, it would feature a scarecrow-haired addict falling to her knees in the white hallway of the Pasadena Recovery Center and crying out—raspingly,



chthonically, her voice not her own—*Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Dr. Drew? Art thou come to destroy us?*

The black magic of reality TV, however, may be beyond the control of even so mighty a medicine man as Dr. Drew. Yes, he has plumbed the pathologies of the culture: in *The Mirror Effect*, he reports that he and his co-author, Dr. Mark S. Young, administered a test called the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) to 200 celebrities, and were grimly vindicated by the results (“reality TV personalities are more narcissistic than any other group, with a very high average score of 19.45”). And yes, he bemoans the passing of “the old phenomenon of public shame.” But can he be sure that his televised merry-go-round of vomiting celebs will have the proper effect?

Might not the deeper message of the show, the one that hits the viewer right in her “mesolimbic reward center,” be: *Get high, young person; get fucked up; and then, when you can’t do that anymore, commend your spirit into the hands of Dr. Drew?*

Nor is his ministry foolproof. After *Celebrity Rehab* Season Two came *Sober House*, another nine-parter, aired earlier this year, that pursued several of the Pasadena alumni into a “sober living” facility. This was a horrible show: removed somewhat from the structuring therapeutic gaze of Dr. Drew, untethered from the PRC’s tight routine, the addicts succumbed bitchily to the dark side of the reality-TV dynamic. They also succumbed, or resuccumbed, to their

addictions. Amber Smith got drunk again. Poor Steven Adler, nodding out on heroin but still standing, knees half-bent and arms akimbo, appeared momentarily to be practicing some kind of narcotic tai chi. Is it possible that being on television was not good for these people?

But Dr. Drew is no doubt right about everything. That the culture is clinically narcissistic, wallowing before the idol Ego, who would deny? Sanity, let there be sanity. Let moderation prevail.

On the other hand, my nucleus accumbens is twitching: I want that third season. I can’t wait to see Heidi Fleiss throw up into a plastic bin. **A**

MORE ONLINE

James Parker comments on his favorite *Celebrity Rehab* moments: theatlantic.com/rehab.

THEATLANTIC.COM

James Parker is an Atlantic contributing editor.

WHETHER THIS SEASON'S SWINE FLU turns out to be deadly or mild, most experts agree that it's only a matter of time before we're hit by a truly devastating flu pandemic—one that might kill more people worldwide than have died of the plague and AIDS combined. In the U.S., the main lines of defense are pharmaceutical—vaccines and antiviral drugs to limit the spread of flu and prevent people from dying from it. Yet now some flu experts are challenging the medical orthodoxy and arguing that for those most in need of protection, flu shots and antiviral drugs may provide little to none. So where does that leave us if a bad pandemic strikes?

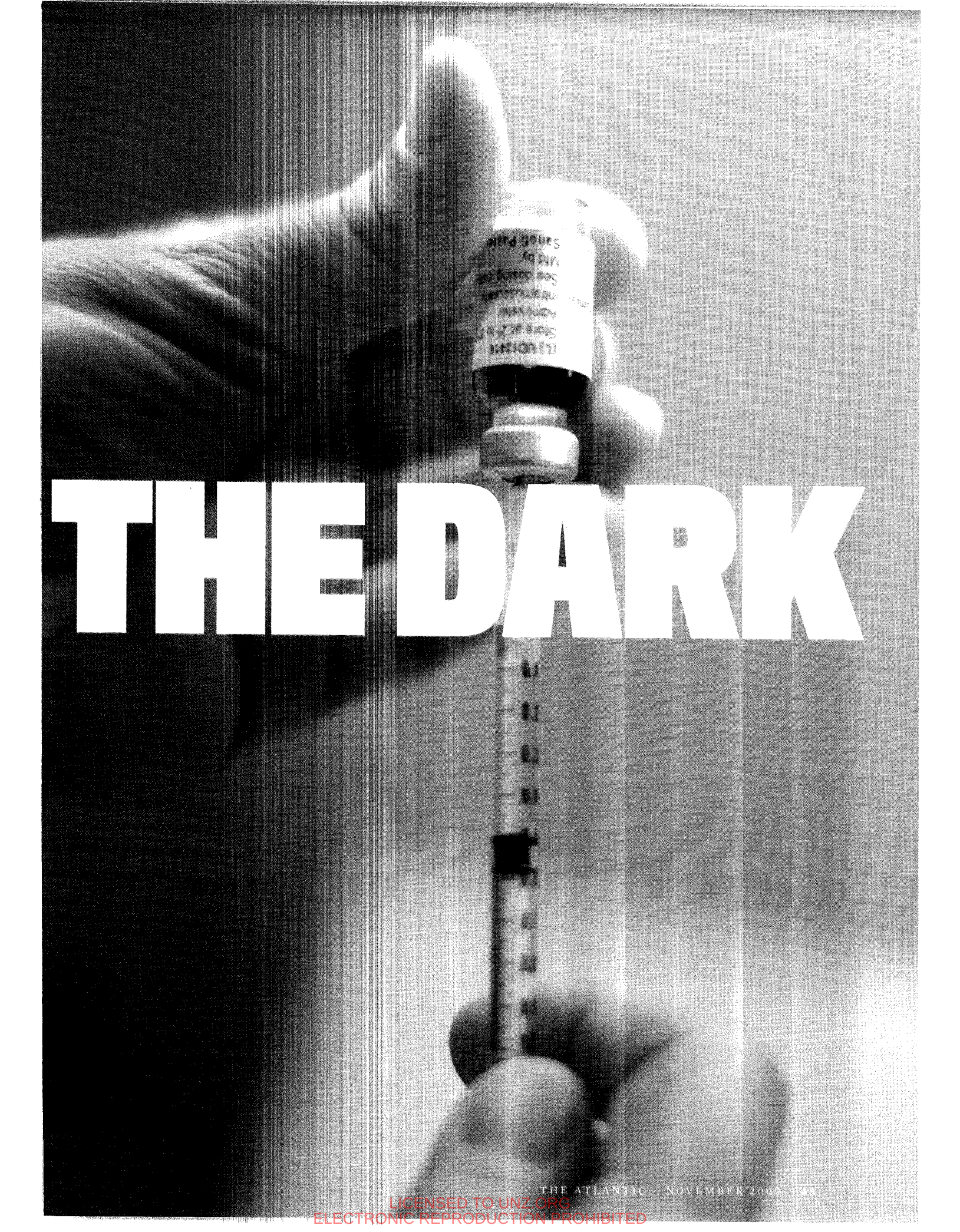
SHOTS IN

By Shannon Brownlee and Jeanne Lenzer

DRIVE TOO FAST along Red Lion Road, beside Philadelphia's Northeast Airport, and you will miss the low-rise cement building where the biotech company MedImmune has been quietly pumping out swine flu vaccine at about a million doses a week. Through the summer and fall, workers wearing protective gear that covered them from head to toe brewed up batches of live, genetically modified flu virus. Robots then injected tiny doses of virus-laden fluid into glass vials, which were mounted into nasal spritzers, labeled, and readied for shipment at the direction of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in Atlanta, which is helping to coordinate the nation's pandemic-preparedness plan. In the most ambitious vaccination program the nation has mounted since the anti-polio campaign in the 1950s, the federal government has commissioned MedImmune and four other companies to produce enough vaccine to cover the entire U.S. population.

Vaccination is central to the government's plan for preventing deaths from swine flu. The CDC has recommended that some 159 million adults and children receive either a swine flu shot or a dose of MedImmune's nasal vaccine this year. Shots are offered in doctors' offices, hospitals, airports, pharmacies, schools, polling places,

JASON REED/REUTERS/CORBIS



THE DARK

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shopping malls, and big-box stores like Wal-Mart. In August, New York state required all health-care workers to get both seasonal and swine flu shots. To further protect the populace, the federal government has spent upwards of \$3 billion stockpiling millions of doses of antiviral drugs like Tamiflu—which are being used both to prevent swine flu and to treat those who fall ill.

But what if everything we think we know about fighting influenza is wrong? What if flu vaccines do not protect people from dying—particularly the elderly, who account for 90 percent of deaths from seasonal flu? And what if the expensive antiviral drugs that the government has stockpiled over the past few years also have little, if any, power to reduce the number of people who die or are hospitalized? The U.S. government—with the support of leaders in the public-health and medical communities—has put its faith in the power of

vaccines and antiviral drugs to limit the spread and lethality of swine flu. Other plans to contain the pandemic seem anemic by comparison. Yet some top flu researchers are deeply skeptical of both flu vaccines and antivirals. Like the engineers who warned for years about the levees of New Orleans, these experts caution that our defenses may be flawed, and quite possibly useless against a truly lethal flu. And that unless we are willing to ask fundamental questions about the science behind flu vaccines and antiviral drugs, we could find ourselves, in a bad epidemic, as helpless as the citizens of New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina.

THE TERM *INFLUENZA*, which dates back to the Middle Ages, is taken from the Italian word for “occult or astral influence.” Then as now, flu seemed to appear out of nowhere each winter, debilitating or killing large numbers of people, only to vanish in the spring. Today, seasonal flu is estimated to kill about 36,000 people in the United States each year, and half a million worldwide.

Yet the flu, in many important respects, remains mysterious. Determining how many deaths it really causes, or even who has it, is no simple matter. We think we have the flu anytime we fall ill with an ailment that brings on headache, malaise, fever, coughing, sneezing, and that achy feeling as if we’ve been sleeping on a bed of rocks, but researchers have found that at most half, and perhaps as few as 7 or 8 percent, of such cases are actually caused by an influenza virus in any given year. More than 200 known viruses and other pathogens can cause the suite of symptoms known as “influenza-like illness”; respiratory syncytial virus, bocavirus, coronavirus, and rhinovirus are just a few of the bugs that can make a person feel rotten. And depending on the season, in up to two-thirds of the cases of flu-like illness, no cause at all can be found.

Nobody knows precisely why we are much more likely to catch the flu in the winter months than at other times of the year. Perhaps it’s because flu viruses flourish in cool temperatures and are killed by exposure to sunlight. Or maybe it’s because in winter, people spend more time indoors, where a sneeze or a cough can more easily spread a virus to others. What is certain is that influenza viruses mutate with amazing speed, so each flu season sees slightly different genetic versions of the viruses that infected people the year before. Every year, the World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention collect data from 94 nations on the flu viruses that circulated the previous year, and then make an educated guess about which viruses are likely to circulate in the coming fall. Based on that information, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration issues orders to manufacturers in February for a vaccine that includes the three most likely strains.

Every once in a while, however, a very different bug pops up and infects far more people than the normal seasonal flu variants do. It is these novel viruses that are responsible for pandemics, defined by the World Health Organization as events that occur when “a new influenza virus appears against which the human population has no immunity” and

VILLANELLE WITH A REFRAIN FROM *THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*

Your twenties, thirties, forties, you’re a bull—
if you think of life as something like the Dow.
Though death of course is unavoidable,

you’re rising so fast rising’s almost dull,
your daily highs untested by a low.
Your twenties, thirties, forties, you’re a bull,

and life, for now, is fast and overfull—
for now, you might say, chuckling, for now—
though death, of course, is unavoidable.

You’re savvy enough, I’m sure, and fully able
to plan for when the market starts to slow.
Your twenties, thirties, forties, you’re a bull,

and all your hours, all, are billable,
as you tell others what, but mostly how,
though death, of course, is unavoidable.

Like contracts, life is fully voidable,
allow deferring soon to disallow.

Your twenties, thirties, forties, you’re a bull,
though death, of course, is unavoidable.

—Andrew Hudgins

Andrew Hudgins’s American Rendering: New and Selected Poems is forthcoming this spring. He teaches at Ohio State University.

which can sweep around the world in a very short time. The worst flu pandemic in recorded history was the “Spanish flu” of 1918–19, at the end of World War I. A third of the world’s population was infected, with at least 40 million and perhaps as many as 100 million people dying—more than were killed in World Wars I and II combined. (Some scholars suggest that one reason World War I ended was that so many soldiers were sick or dying from flu.) Since then, two other flu pandemics have occurred, in 1957 and 1968, neither of which was particularly lethal.

In August, the President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology projected that this fall and winter, the swine flu, H1N1, could infect anywhere between one-third and one-half of the U.S. population and could kill as many as 90,000 Americans, two and a half times the number killed in a typical flu season. But precisely how deadly, or even how infectious, this year’s H1N1 pandemic will turn out to be won’t be known until it’s over. Most reports coming from the Southern Hemisphere in late August (the end of winter there) suggested that the swine flu is highly infectious, but not particularly lethal. For example, Australian officials estimated they would finish winter with under 1,000 swine flu deaths—fewer than the usual 1,500 to 3,000 from seasonal flu. Among those who have died in the U.S., about 70 percent were already suffering from congenital conditions like cerebral palsy or underlying illnesses such as cancer, asthma, or AIDS, which make people more vulnerable.

Public-health officials consider vaccine their most formidable defense against the pandemic—indeed, against any flu—and on the surface, their faith seems justified. Vaccines developed over the course of the 20th century slashed the death rates of nearly a dozen infectious diseases, such as smallpox and polio, and vaccination became one of medicine’s most potent weapons. Influenza virus was first identified in the 1930s, and by the mid-1940s, researchers had produced a vaccine that was given to soldiers in World War II. The U.S. government got serious about promoting flu vaccine after the 1957 flu pandemic brought home influenza’s continuing potential to cause widespread illness and death. Today, flu vaccine is a staple of public-health policy; in a normal year, some 100 million Americans get vaccinated.

But while vaccines for, say, whooping cough and polio clearly and dramatically reduced death rates from those diseases, the impact of flu vaccine has been harder to determine. Flu comes and goes with the seasons, and often it does not kill people directly, but rather contributes to death by making the body more susceptible to secondary infections like pneumonia or bronchitis. For this reason, researchers studying the impact of flu vaccination typically look at deaths from all causes during flu season, and compare the vaccinated and unvaccinated populations.

Such comparisons have shown a dramatic difference in mortality between these two groups: study after study has found that people who get a flu shot in the fall are about half

as likely to die that winter—from any cause—as people who do not. Get your flu shot each year, the literature suggests, and you will dramatically reduce your chance of dying during flu season.

Yet in the view of several vaccine skeptics, this claim is suspicious on its face. Influenza causes only a small minority of all deaths in the U.S., even among senior citizens, and even after adding in the deaths to which flu might have contributed indirectly. When researchers from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases included all deaths from illnesses that flu aggravates, like lung disease or chronic heart failure, they found that flu accounts for, at most, 10 percent of winter deaths among the elderly. So how could flu vaccine possibly reduce total deaths by half? Tom Jefferson, a physician based in Rome and the head of the Vaccines Field at the Cochrane Collaboration, a highly respected international network of researchers who appraise medical evidence, says: “For a vaccine to reduce mortality by 50 percent and up to 90 percent in some studies means it has to prevent deaths

not just from influenza, but also from falls, fires, heart disease, strokes, and car accidents. That’s not a vaccine, that’s a miracle.”

The estimate of 50 percent mortality reduction is based on “cohort studies,” which compare death rates in large groups, or cohorts, of people who choose to be vaccinated, against death rates in groups who don’t. But people who choose to be vaccinated may differ in many important respects from people who go unvaccinated—and those differences can influence the chance of death during flu season. Education, lifestyle, income, and many other “confounding” factors can come into play, and as a result, cohort studies are notoriously prone to bias. When researchers crunch the numbers, they typically try to

factor out variables that could bias the results, but, as Jefferson remarks, “you can adjust for the confounders you know about, not for the ones you don’t,” and researchers can’t always anticipate what factors are likely to be important to whether a patient dies from flu. There is always the chance that they might miss some critical confounder that renders their results entirely wrong.

When Lisa Jackson, a physician and senior investigator with the Group Health Research Center, in Seattle, began wondering aloud to colleagues if maybe something was amiss with the estimate of 50 percent mortality reduction for people who get flu vaccine, the response she got sounded more like doctrine than science. “People told me, ‘No good can come of [asking] this,’” she says. “‘Potentially a lot of bad could happen’ for me professionally by raising any criticism that might dissuade people from getting vaccinated, because of course, ‘We know that vaccine works.’ This was the prevailing wisdom.”

Nonetheless, in 2004, Jackson and three colleagues set out to determine whether the mortality difference between the vaccinated and the unvaccinated might be caused by a phenomenon known as the “healthy user effect.” They hypothesized that on average, people who get vaccinated are

“We have built huge, population-based policies on the flimsiest of scientific evidence. The most unethical thing to do is to carry on business as usual.”

simply healthier than those who don't, and thus less liable to die over the short term. People who don't get vaccinated may be bedridden or otherwise too sick to go get a shot. They may also be more likely to succumb to flu or any other illness, because they are generally older and sicker. To test their thesis, Jackson and her colleagues combed through eight years of medical data on more than 72,000 people 65 and older. They looked at who got flu shots and who didn't. Then they examined which group's members were more likely to die of any cause when it was *not* flu season.

Jackson's findings showed that *outside of flu season*, the baseline risk of death among people who did not get vaccinated was approximately 60 percent higher than among those who did, lending support to the hypothesis that on average, healthy people chose to get the vaccine, while the "frail elderly" didn't or couldn't. In fact, the healthy-user effect explained the entire benefit that other researchers were attributing to flu vaccine, suggesting that the vaccine itself might not reduce mortality at all. Jackson's papers "are beautiful," says Lone Simonsen, who is a professor of global health at George Washington University, in Washington, D.C., and an internationally recognized expert in influenza and vaccine epidemiology. "They are classic studies in epidemiology, they are so carefully done."

The results were also so unexpected that many experts simply refused to believe them. Jackson's papers were turned down for publication in the top-ranked medical journals. One flu expert who reviewed her studies for the *Journal of the American Medical Association* wrote, "To accept these results would be to say that the earth is flat!" When the papers were finally published in 2006, in the less prominent *International Journal of Epidemiology*, they were largely ignored by doctors and public-health officials. "The answer I got," says Jackson, "was not the right answer."

THE HISTORY OF FLU VACCINATION suggests other reasons to doubt claims that it dramatically reduces mortality. In 2004, for example, vaccine production fell behind, causing a 40 percent drop in immunization rates. Yet mortality did not rise. In addition, vaccine "mismatches" occurred in 1968 and 1997: in both years, the vaccine that had been produced in the summer protected against one set of viruses, but come winter, a different set was circulating. In effect, nobody was vaccinated. Yet death rates from all causes, including flu and the various illnesses it can exacerbate, did not budge. Sumit Majumdar, a physician and researcher at the University of Alberta, in Canada, offers another historical observation: rising rates of vaccination of the elderly over the past two decades have not coincided with a lower overall mortality rate. In 1989, only 15 percent of people over age 65 in the U.S. and Canada were vaccinated against flu. Today, more than 65 percent are immunized. Yet death rates among the elderly during flu season have increased rather than decreased.

Vaccine proponents call Majumdar's last observation an "ecological fallacy," because he fails, in their view, to consider changes in the larger environment that could have boosted death rates over the years—even as rising vaccination rates were doing their part to keep mortality in check. The proponents suggest, for instance, that influenza viruses may have

become more contagious over time, and thus are infecting greater numbers of elderly people, including some who have been vaccinated. Or maybe the viruses are becoming more lethal. Or maybe the elderly have less immunity to flu than they once did because, say, their diets have changed.

Or maybe vaccine just doesn't prevent deaths in the elderly. Of course, that's the one possibility that vaccine adherents won't consider. Nancy Cox, the CDC's influenza division chief, says flatly, "The flu vaccine is the best way to protect against flu." Anthony Fauci, a physician and the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases at the NIH, where much of the basic science of flu vaccine has been worked out, says, "I have no doubt that it is effective in conferring some degree of protection. To say otherwise is a minority view."

Majumdar says, "We keep coming up against the belief that we've reduced mortality by 50 percent," and when researchers poke holes in the evidence, "people pound the pulpit."

THE MOST VOCAL—and undoubtedly most vexing—critic of the gospel of flu vaccine is the Cochrane Collaboration's Jefferson, who's also an epidemiologist trained at the famed London School of Tropical Hygiene, and who, in Lisa Jackson's view, makes other skeptics seem "moderate by comparison." Among his fellow flu researchers, Jefferson's outspokenness has made him something of a pariah. At a 2007 meeting on pandemic preparedness at a hotel in Bethesda, Maryland, Jefferson, who'd been invited to speak at the conference, was not greeted by any of the colleagues milling about the lobby. He ate his meals in the hotel restaurant alone, surrounded by scientists chatting amiably at other tables. He shrugs off such treatment. As a medical officer working for the United Nations in 1992, during the siege of Sarajevo, he and other peacekeepers were captured and held for more than a month by militiamen brandishing AK-47s and reeking of alcohol. Professional shunning seems trivial by comparison, he says.

"Tom Jefferson has taken a lot of heat just for saying, 'Here's the evidence: it's not very good,'" says Majumdar. "The reaction has been so dogmatic and even hysterical that you'd think he was advocating stealing babies." Yet while other flu researchers may not like what Jefferson has to say, they cannot ignore the fact that he knows the flu-vaccine literature better than anyone else on the planet. He leads an international team of researchers who have combed through hundreds of flu-vaccine studies. The vast majority of the studies were deeply flawed, says Jefferson. "*Rubbish* is not a scientific term, but I think it's the term that applies." Only four studies were properly designed to pin down the effectiveness of flu vaccine, he says, and two of those showed that it might be effective in certain groups of patients, such as school-age children with no underlying health issues like asthma. The other two showed equivocal results or no benefit.

Flu researchers have been fooled into thinking vaccine is more effective than the data suggest, in part, says Jefferson, by the imprecision of the statistics. The only way to know if someone has the flu—as opposed to influenza-like illness—is



IDEAS SPOTLIGHT: INNOVATION IN EDUCATION

At Altria, we believe that strong educational systems empower students with a sense of pride, civic engagement and the passion to succeed. We're particularly passionate about programs that think beyond the classroom and recognize the important roles that parents, community organizations and policymakers play in preparing young people for success in life and work. That's why we'd like to highlight an innovator in helping community leaders think and act differently—the Ready by 21 Partnership.

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"The Ready by 21 framework is exactly right. It's not just about education. It's about families. It's about community. It's about working together to make sure that young people succeed."

**Brian Gallagher, President and
CEO, United Way of America**

**Learn how you can help ensure our
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by putting a Q-tip into the patient's throat or nose and running a test, which simply isn't done that often. Likewise, nobody really has a handle on how many of the deaths that are blamed on flu were actually caused by a flu virus, because few are confirmed by a laboratory. "I used to be a family physician," says Jefferson. "I've never seen a patient come to my office with *H1N1* written on his forehead. When an old person dies of respiratory failure after an influenza-like illness, they nearly always get coded as influenza."

There's one other way flu researchers may be fooled into thinking flu vaccine is effective, Jefferson says. All vaccines work by delivering a dose of killed or weakened virus or bacteria, which provokes the immune system into producing antibodies. When the person is subsequently exposed to the real thing, the body is already prepared to repel the bug completely or to get rid of it after a mild illness. Flu researchers often use antibody response as a way of gauging the effectiveness of vaccine, on the assumption that levels of antibodies in the blood of people who have been vaccinated are a good predictor—although an imperfect one—of how well they can ward off the infection.

There's some merit to this reasoning. Unfortunately, the very people who most need protection from the flu also have immune systems that are least likely to respond to vaccine. Studies show that young, healthy people mount a glorious immune response to seasonal flu vaccine, and their response reduces their chances of getting the flu and may lessen the severity of symptoms if they do get it. But they aren't the people who die from seasonal flu. By contrast, the elderly, particularly those over age 70, don't have a good immune response to vaccine—and they're the ones who account for most flu deaths. (Infants with severe disabilities, such as leukemia and congenital lung disease, and people who are immune-compromised—from AIDS, or diabetes, or cancer treatment—make up the rest. As of August 8, only 36 deaths from swine flu had been confirmed among children in the U.S., and the overwhelming majority of those children had multiple, severe health disorders.)

In Jefferson's view, this raises a troubling conundrum: Is vaccine necessary for those in whom it is effective, namely the young and healthy? Conversely, is it effective in those for whom it seems to be necessary, namely the old, the very young, and the infirm? These questions have led to the most controversial aspect of Jefferson's work: his call for placebo-controlled trials, studies that would randomly give half the test subjects vaccine and the other half a dummy shot, or placebo. Only such large, well-constructed, randomized trials can show with any precision how effective vaccine really is, and for whom.

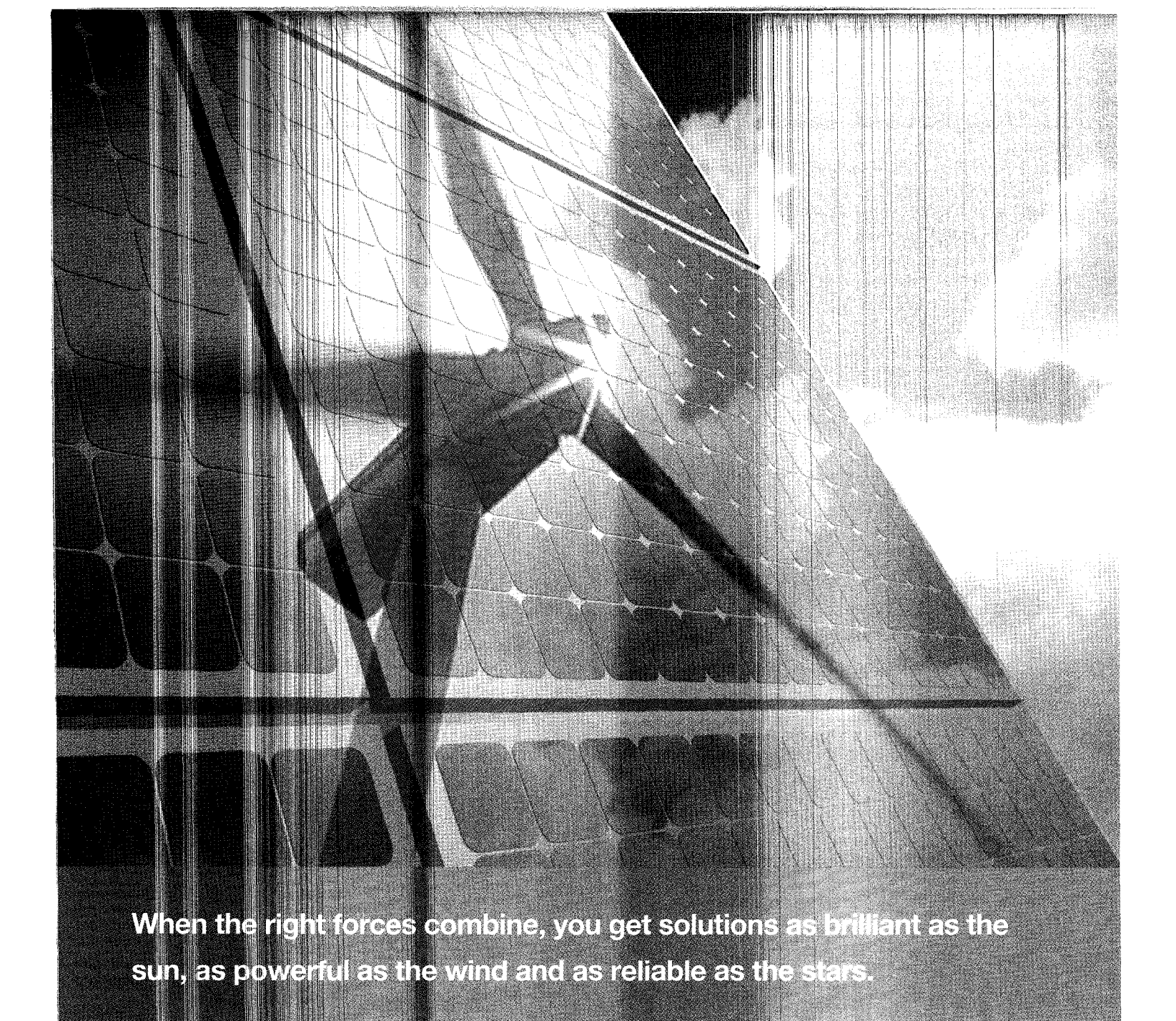
In the flu-vaccine world, Jefferson's call for placebo-controlled studies is considered so radical that even some of his fellow skeptics oppose it. Majumdar, the Ottawa researcher, says he believes that evidence of a benefit among children is established and that public-health officials should try to protect seniors by immunizing children, health-care workers,

and other people around them, and thus reduce the spread of the flu. Lone Simonsen explains the prevailing view: "It is considered unethical to do trials in populations that are recommended to have vaccine," a stance that is shared by everybody from the CDC's Nancy Cox to Anthony Fauci at the NIH. They feel strongly that vaccine has been shown to be effective and that a sham vaccine would put test subjects at unnecessary risk of getting a serious case of the flu. In a phone interview, Fauci at first voiced the opinion that a placebo trial in the elderly might be acceptable, but he called back later to retract his comment, saying that such a trial "would be unethical." Jefferson finds this view almost exactly backward: "What do you do when you have uncertainty? You test," he says. "We have built huge, population-based policies on the flimsiest of scientific evidence. The most unethical thing to do is to carry on business as usual."

JUST AFTER 6 P.M. on a warm Friday evening in July, Dr. David Newman is only minutes into a 10-hour shift in the emergency room of New York City's St. Luke's Hospital, and already he has assumed responsibility for 11 patients. The young Italian tourist sitting on the bed in front of the doctor has meningitis, and through an interpreter, Newman tells him he almost certainly has the viral form of the disease, which will do nothing more than make him feel ill for a few days. There is a tiny chance, says Newman, that the illness is caused by a bacterium, which can be deadly, but he is almost positive that's not what the tourist has. He says to his patient, "I can't tell you with 100 percent certainty that you don't have it, but if you do, you'll begin to feel worse and you'll need to come back." The tourist, on learning that he might be infected with a potentially lethal disease, looks down at his feet and confesses that he is much more worried about another illness: swine flu. Newman smiles patiently. "It would be nice if you had swine flu," he says. "Compared to bacterial meningitis, swine flu is safe."

Late last spring, as headlines and airwaves warned of a possible pandemic, patients like Newman's began clogging emergency rooms across the country, a sneezing, coughing, infectious tide of humanity more worried than truly sick, but whose mere presence in the emergency room has endangered the lives of others. "Studies show that when there is ER crowding, mortality goes up, because patients who need immediate attention don't get it," says Newman, the director of clinical research in the Department of Emergency Medicine at the hospital, which is affiliated with Columbia University. In an average year the ER at St. Luke's, a sprawling 1,076-bed hospital on 113th Street, takes in 110,000 patients, some 300 a day. At the height of the summer swine flu outbreak, that number doubled. The vast majority of panicky patients who came in the door at St. Luke's and other emergency departments didn't actually have the virus, and of those who did, most were not sick enough to need hospitalization. Even so, says Newman, when patients with even mild flu symptoms show up in the hospital, they vastly increase

Samples of resistant H1N1 were cropping up by midsummer. By mid-August, two U.S. swine flu patients had developed Tamiflu-resistant strains.

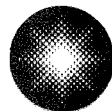


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the spread of the virus, simply because they inevitably sneeze and cough in rooms that are jammed with other people.

Many of the worried sick come to St. Luke's and other hospitals in search of antiviral drugs. The CDC recommends the use of two drugs against H1N1: oseltamivir and zanamivir, better known by their brand names, Tamiflu and Relenza, which together form the second pillar of the government's anti-pandemic-flu strategy. Public-health officials at the state and local levels are also recommending the drugs. Guidelines issued by the New York City Department of Health, says Newman, "encourage us to give a prescription to just about every patient with the sniffles," a practice that some experts worry will quickly lead to resistant strains of the virus.

Indeed, that's already happening. Daniel Janies, an associate professor of biomedical informatics at Ohio State University, tracks the genetic mutations that allow flu virus to

develop resistance to drugs. Flu can become resistant to Tamiflu in a matter of days, he says. Handing out the drug early in the pandemic, when H1N1 poses only a minimal threat to the vast majority of patients, strikes him as "shortsighted." Indeed, samples of resistant H1N1 were cropping up by mid-summer, increasing the likelihood that come late fall, many people will be infected with a resistant strain of swine flu. Alarmed at that prospect, the World Health Organization issued an alert on August 21, recommending that Tamiflu and Relenza be used only in severe cases and in patients who are at high risk of serious complications. By mid-August, two U.S. swine flu patients had developed Tamiflu-resistant strains.

The U.S. first began stockpiling Tamiflu and Relenza back in 2005, in the wake of concern that an outbreak in Southeast Asia of bird flu, a far more deadly form of the disease, might go global. On November 1, 2005, President George W. Bush pronounced pandemic flu a "danger to our homeland," and he asked Congress to approve legislation that included \$1 billion for the production and stockpiling of antivirals. This was after Congress had already approved \$1.8 billion to stockpile Tamiflu for the military, a decision that was made during the tenure of Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. (Before joining the Bush Cabinet, Rumsfeld was chairman for four years of Gilead Sciences, the company that holds the patent on Tamiflu, and he held millions of dollars' worth of stock in the company. According to *Roll Call*, an online newspaper covering events on Capitol Hill, Rumsfeld says he recused himself from all government decisions involving Tamiflu. Gilead's stock price rose more than 50 percent in 2005, when the government's plan was announced.)

As with vaccines, the scientific evidence for Tamiflu and Relenza is thin at best. In its general-information section, the CDC's Web site tells readers that antiviral drugs can "make you feel better faster." True, but not by much. On average, Tamiflu (which accounts for 85 to 90 percent of the flu antiviral-drug market) cuts the duration of flu symptoms by 24 hours in otherwise healthy people. In exchange for a slightly shorter bout of illness, as many as one in five people taking Tamiflu will experience nausea and vomiting. About one in five children will have neuropsychiatric side effects, possibly including anxiety and suicidal behavior. In Japan, where Tamiflu is liberally prescribed, the drug may have been responsible for 50 deaths from cardiopulmonary arrest, from 2001 to 2007, according to Rokuro Hama, the chair of the Japan Institute of Pharmacovigilance.

Such side effects might be worth risking if the antivirals prevented serious complications of flu, such as pneumonia, hospitalization, and death. Roche Laboratories, the company licensed to manufacture and market Tamiflu, says its drug does just that. In two September 2006 press releases, the company announced, "Tamiflu significantly reduces the risk of death from influenza: New data shows

CARDINAL

Already, before dawn, the calendar cold moon still clear,
sparkle of ice here and there, and almost out of hearing,
he is singing, which is really, likely, countersinging,
interspersed with chip calls, then for a while,
except for the hilltop wind riffing the white-laced pines,
silence, as if he's disappeared through a door left open
in the air.

Yet by noon his first-blood brilliant coloring
is fire against the snow, skilled in the way it moves
with one side of his body tilted up—one wing pointed
toward a signature of flight, one wing tucked in tight—
in what the watchers call "lopsided pose,"
on a slip of branch just outside the window
where he waits out the moment to reattack the glass,
the sun, which is striking at an angle
from ninety million miles, maybe more.

I watch him
climb the storm frame and say again his reasons,
watch him in a detail impossible otherwise—
his several criminal reds, his flared sunlit crown,
the bandit mask that sets apart the quickness of the eyes:
so when his mate shows up and he shows off his bright head
turning sideways, he tips his tail and places a piece
of pine seed into her willing mouth.
She, too, one winter, flew at the glass.

—Stanley Plumly

Stanley Plumly's recent books include Posthumous Keats (2008) and the poetry collection Old Heart, a finalist for the 2007 National Book Award. He teaches at the University of Maryland.

treatment was associated with more than a two third reduction in deaths,” and “Children with influenza [are] 53 percent less likely to contract pneumonia when treated with Tamiflu.” Once again cohort studies (the same kind of potentially biased research that led to the conclusion that flu vaccine cuts mortality by 50 percent) are behind these claims. Tamiflu costs \$10 a pill. It is possible that people who take it are more likely to be insured and affluent, or at least middle-class, than those who do not, and a large body of evidence shows that the well-off nearly always fare better than the poor when stricken with an infectious disease, including flu. In both 2003 and 2009, reviews of randomized placebo-controlled studies found that the study populations simply weren’t large enough to answer the question: Does Tamiflu prevent pneumonia?

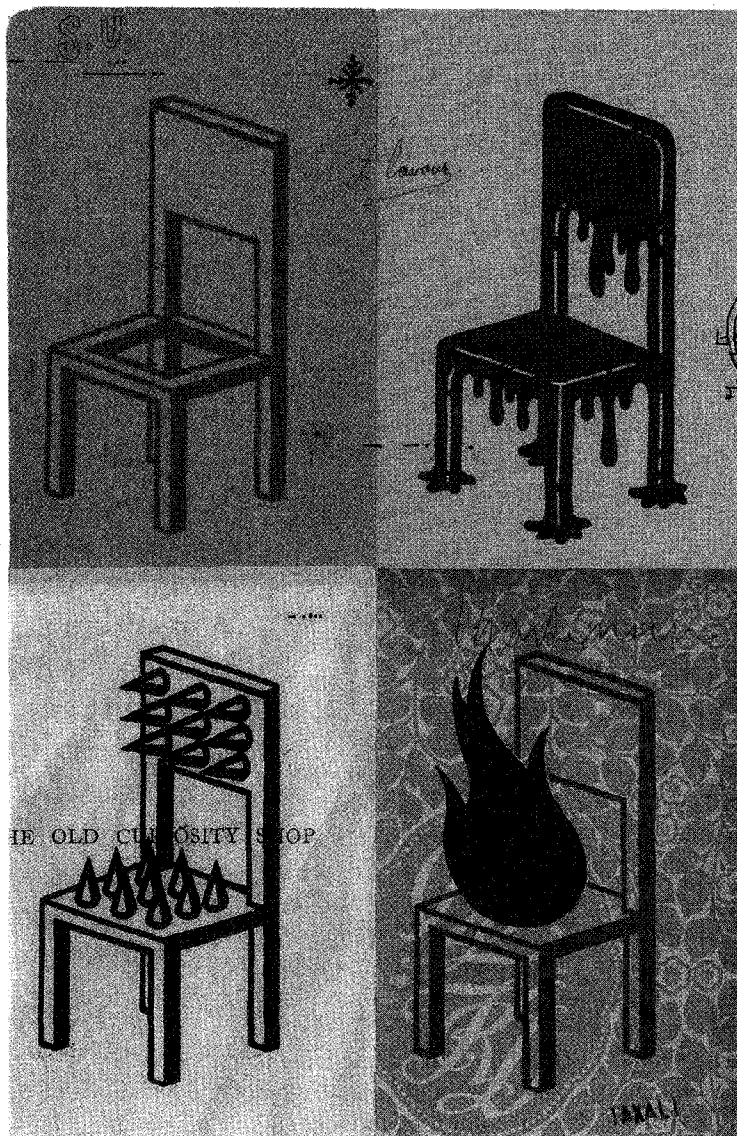
As late as this August, the company’s own Web site contained the following statement, which was written under the direction of the FDA: “Tamiflu has not been proven to have a positive impact on the potential consequences (such as hospitalizations, mortality, or economic impact) of seasonal, avian, or pandemic influenza.” An FDA spokesperson said recently that the agency is unaware of any data submitted by Roche that would support the claims in the company’s September 2006 news release about the drug’s reducing flu deaths.

WHY, THEN, HAS the federal government stockpiled millions of doses of antivirals, at a cost of several billion dollars? And why are physicians being encouraged to hand out prescriptions to large numbers of people, without sound evidence that the drugs will help? The short answer may be that public-health officials feel they must offer something, and these drugs are the only possible remedies at hand. “I have to agree with the critics ... the antiviral question is not cut-and-dried,” says Fauci. “But [these drugs are] the best we have.” The CDC’s Nancy Cox also acknowledges that the science is not as sound as she might like, but the government still recommends their use. And as with vaccines, she considers additional randomized placebo-controlled trials of the antiviral drugs to be “unethical” and thus out of the question.

This is the curious state of debate about the government’s two main weapons in the fight against pandemic flu. At first, government officials declare that both vaccines and drugs are effective. When faced with contrary evidence, the adherents acknowledge that the science is not as crisp as they might wish. Then, in response to calls for placebo-controlled trials, which would provide clear results one way or the other, the proponents say such studies would deprive patients of vaccines and drugs that have already been deemed effective. “We can’t just let people die,” says Cox.

Students of U.S. medical history will find this circular logic familiar: it is a long-recurring theme in American medicine,

GALLERY *Disinclination* by Gary Taxali



and one that has, on occasion, had deadly consequences. In 1925, Sinclair Lewis caricatured a medical culture that allowed belief—and profits—to distort science in his Pulitzer Prize-winning book, *Arrowsmith*. Based on the lives of the real-life microbiologists Paul de Kruif and Jacques Loeb, Lewis tells the story of Martin Arrowsmith, a physician who invents a new vaccine during a deadly outbreak of bubonic plague. But his efforts to test the vaccine’s efficacy are frustrated by an angry community that desperately wants to believe the vaccine works, and a profit-hungry institute that rushes the vaccine into use prematurely—forever preempting the proper studies that are needed.

The annals of medicine are littered with treatments and tests that became medical doctrine on the slimmest of evidence, and were then declared sacrosanct and beyond scientific investigation. In the 1980s and ’90s, for example, cancer specialists were convinced that high-dose chemotherapy followed by a bone-marrow transplant was the best hope for

women with advanced breast cancer, and many refused to enroll their patients in randomized clinical trials that were designed to test transplants against the standard—and far less toxic—therapy. The trials, they said, were unethical, because they *knew* transplants worked. When the studies were concluded, in 1999 and 2000, it turned out that bone-marrow transplants were killing patients. Another recent example involves drugs related to the analgesic lidocaine. In the 1970s, doctors noticed that the drugs seemed to make the heart beat rhythmically, and they began prescribing them to patients suffering from irregular heartbeats, assuming that restoring a proper rhythm would reduce the patient's risk of dying. Prominent cardiologists for years opposed clinical trials of the drugs, saying it would be medical malpractice to withhold them from patients in a control group. The drugs were widely used for two decades, until a government-sponsored study showed in 1989 that patients who were prescribed the medicine were three and a half times as likely to die as those given a placebo.

Demonstrating the efficacy (or lack thereof) of vaccine and antivirals during flu season would not be hard to do, given the proper resources. Take a group of people who are at risk of getting the flu, and randomly assign half to get vaccine and the other half a dummy shot. Then count the people in each group who come down with flu, suffer serious illness, or die. (A similarly designed trial would suffice for the antivirals.) It might sound coldhearted, but it is the only way to know for certain whether, and for whom, current remedies actually work. It would also be useful to know whether vaccinating healthy people—who can mount an immune response on their own—protects the more vulnerable people around them. For example, immunizing nursing-home staff and healthy children is thought to reduce the spread of flu to the elderly and the immune-compromised. Pinning down the effectiveness of this strategy would be a bit more complex, but not impossible.

IN THE ABSENCE of such evidence, we are left with two possibilities. One is that flu vaccine is in fact highly beneficial, or at least helpful. Solid evidence to that effect would encourage more citizens—and particularly more health professionals—to get their shots and prevent the flu's spread. As it stands, more than 50 percent of health-care workers say they do not intend to get vaccinated for swine flu and don't routinely get their shots for seasonal flu, in part because many of them doubt the vaccines' efficacy. The other possibility, of course, is that we're relying heavily on vaccines and antivirals that simply don't work, or don't work as well as we believe. And as a result, we may be neglecting other, proven measures that could minimize the death rate during pandemics.

"Vaccines give us a false sense of security," says Sumit Majumdar. "When you have a strategy that [everybody thinks] reduces death by 50 percent, it's pretty hard to invest resources to come up with better remedies." For instance,

"Vaccines give us a false sense of security," says Majumdar. "When you have a strategy that [everyone thinks] reduces death by 50 percent, it's pretty hard to invest resources to come up with better remedies."

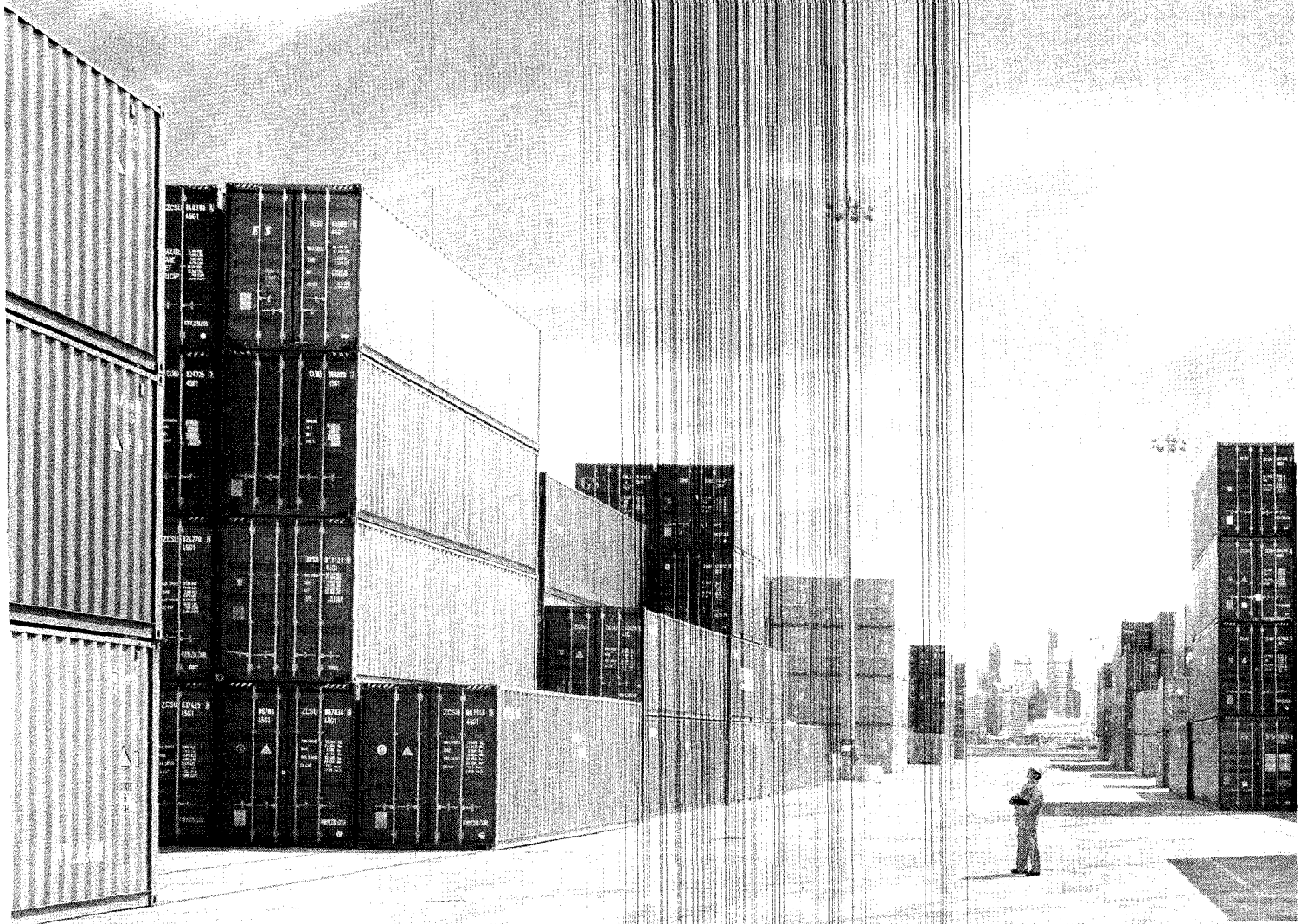
health departments in every state are responsible for submitting plans to the CDC for educating the public, in the event of a serious pandemic, about hand-washing and "social distancing" (voluntary quarantines, school closings, and even enforcement of mandatory quarantines to keep infected people in their homes). Putting these plans into action will require considerable coordination among government officials, the media, and health-care workers—and widespread buy-in from the public. Yet little discussion has appeared in the press to help people understand the measures they can take to best protect themselves during a flu outbreak—other than vaccination and antivirals.

"Launched early enough and continued long enough, social distancing can blunt the impact of a pandemic," says Howard Markel, a pediatrician and historian of medicine at the University of Michigan. Washing hands diligently, avoiding public places during an outbreak, and having a supply of canned goods and water on hand are sound defenses, he says. Such steps could be highly effective in helping to slow the spread of the virus. In Mexico, for instance, where the first swine flu cases were identified in March, the government launched an aggressive program to get people to wash their hands and exhorted those who were sick to stay home and effectively quarantine themselves. In the United Kingdom, the national health department is promoting a "buddy" program, encouraging citizens to find a friend or neighbor willing to deliver food and medicine so people who fall ill can stay home.

In the U.S., by contrast, our reliance on vaccination may have the opposite effect: breeding feelings of invulnerability, and leading some people to ignore simple measures like better-than-normal hygiene, staying away from those who are sick, and staying home when they feel ill. Likewise, our encouragement of early treatment with antiviral drugs will likely lead many people to show up at the hospital at first sniffle. "There's no worse place to go than the hospital during flu season," says Majumdar. Those who don't have the flu are more likely to catch it there, and those who do will spread it around, he says. "But we don't tell people this."

All of which leaves open the question of what people should do when faced with a decision about whether to get themselves and their families vaccinated. There is little immediate danger from getting a seasonal flu shot, aside from a sore arm and mild flu-like symptoms. The safety of the swine flu vaccine remains to be seen. In the absence of better evidence, vaccines and antivirals must be viewed as only partial and uncertain defenses against the flu. And they may be mere talismans. By being afraid to do the proper studies now, we may be condemning ourselves to using treatments based on illusion and faith rather than sound science. ■

*Shannon Brownlee is a senior research fellow at the New America Foundation and the author of *Overtreated* (2007). Jeanne Lenzer is an investigative journalist and a frequent contributor to the British medical journal *BMJ*.*



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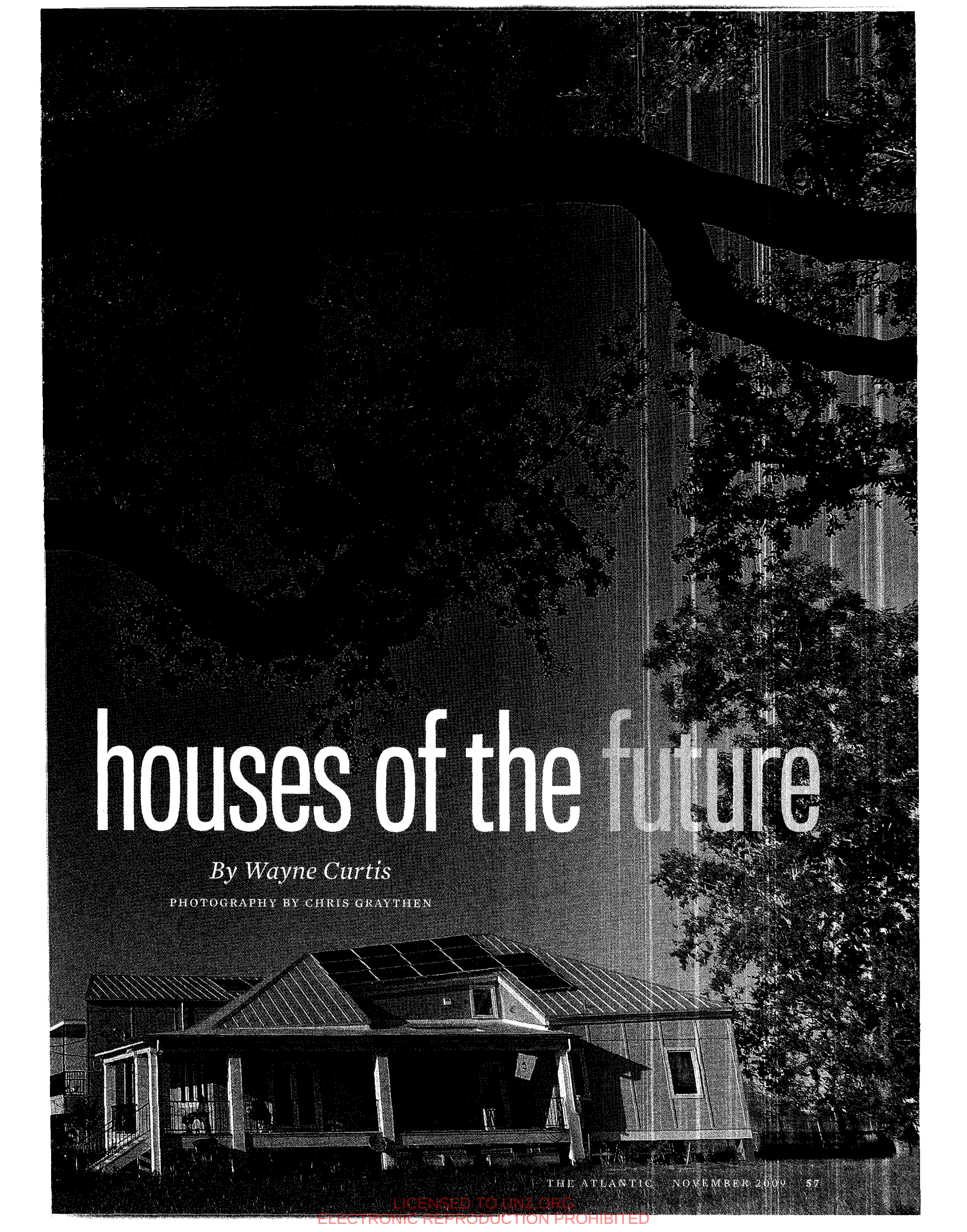
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houses of the future

By Wayne Curtis

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRIS GRAYTHEN

A STURDY BIKE is a good way to get around the Lower Ninth Ward in New Orleans. The roads are still pretty rough, the distances between places tend to be too long to walk and too short to drive, and on a bike you can easily stop and chat with the residents who have returned. I moved to New Orleans about a year after Hurricane Katrina, and I've ridden my bike out here every month or two to see how the rebuilding has been faring. Also, I've heard that Brad Pitt likes to bike around when he's in town. Folks tell me he's a pretty regular guy. "Brad was here yesterday," a woman sitting on the front steps of her new and very modern house told me one day last fall. "He was talking to everyone, just checking things out."

He has a lot to check out, as it happens. Next to the levee along the Mississippi River sits the experimental "project house" of Global Green, a nonprofit Pitt has been working with that's trying to replace homes lost in the flood with energy-efficient ones. From there, it takes about 10 minutes to bike to the northern edge of the Ninth Ward, where the Industrial Canal flood wall collapsed in August 2005. Along the way you pass shotgun houses in various stages of repair and disrepair; Fats Domino's home, from which he was rescued; and a large sculpture of empty chairs commemorating the hundreds who died in the storm. As you get closer to the failed flood wall, the land becomes more open and rural-looking, and the blackbirds grow louder. Only concrete steps standing in front of concrete slabs suggest the community that existed before the rushing waters erased it.

And then, suddenly, amid heroically overgrown lawns, you see a cluster of modern, colorful, and modestly sized homes, looking like a farm where they grow houses for *Dwell* magazine. These are the fruits to date of Pitt's other project, Make It Right New Orleans. New Orleanians refer to these homes collectively as "the Brad Pitt Houses," which gives them the pleasing ring of an ambitious public-housing project from the post-World War II years. But Pitt's ambitions are not merely utilitarian. He hopes to offer displaced residents affordable, cutting-edge, radically green homes designed by name-brand architects like Thom Mayne and Frank Gehry. And he seems to be succeeding.

FOUR YEARS AFTER KATRINA, the rebuilding of New Orleans is not proceeding the way anyone envisioned, nor with the expected cast of characters. (If I may emphasize: Brad Pitt is the city's most innovative and ambitious housing developer.) But it's hard to say what people were expecting, given the magnitude of the disaster and the hopes raised in the weeks immediately following. Seventeen days after the storm, President George W. Bush stood in Jackson Square and promised: "We will stay as long as it takes to help citizens rebuild their communities and their lives."

The terms *we, as long as it takes*, and *help* turned out to be fairly elastic. The Federal Emergency Management Agency shuttered its long-term recovery office about six months later, after a squabble with the city over who would pay for the

planning process. Since then, depending on whom you talk to, government at all levels has been passive and slow-moving at best, or belligerent and actively harmful at worst. Mayor Ray Nagin occasionally surfaces to advertise a big new scheme (a jazz park, a theater district), about which no one ever hears again. A new 20-year master plan and comprehensive zoning ordinance was being ironed out early this summer, but it remains subject to city-council approval. A post-Katrina master plan has been under discussion since before the floodwaters were pumped out.

In the absence of strong central leadership, the rebuilding has atomized into a series of independent neighborhood projects. And this has turned New Orleans—moist, hot, with a fecund substrate that seems to allow almost anything to propagate—into something of a petri dish for ideas about housing and urban life. An assortment of foundations, church groups, academics, corporate titans, Hollywood celebrities, young people with big ideas, and architects on a mission have been working independently to rebuild the city's neighborhoods, all wholly unconcerned about the missing master plan. It's at once exhilarating and frightening to behold.

"If you look at the way ants behave when they're gathering food, it looks like the stupidest, most irrational thing you've ever seen—they're zigzagging all over the place, they're bumping into other ants. You think, 'What a mess! This is never going to amount to anything,'" says Michael Mehaffy, the head of the Sustasis Foundation, which studies urban life and sustainability and has worked with neighborhood organizations here. "So it's easy to look at New Orleans at the grassroots level and wonder, 'What's going on here?' But if you step back and look at the big picture, in fact it's the most efficient pattern possible, because all those random activities actually create a very efficient sort of discovery process."

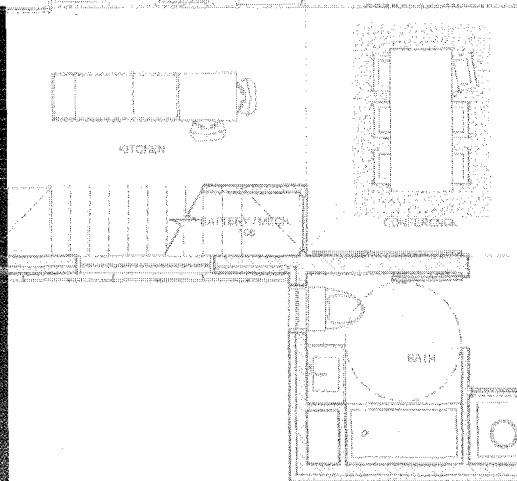
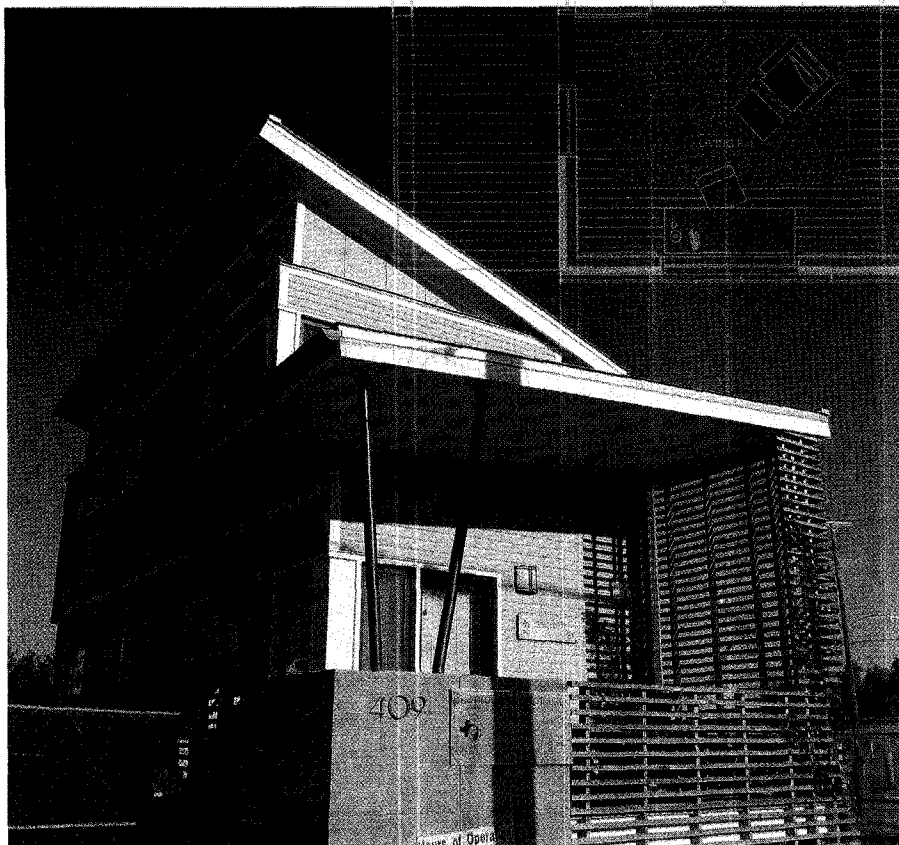
This process is unfolding in a city where the effects of environmental disregard—from disappearing wetlands to rising temperatures to encroaching seas—seem more palpable by the day, and where *sustainability* seems less like an annoying buzzword and more like a moral imperative. Add to this the sudden collapse of the credit and real-estate markets last year, and the fleeting yet unnerving flirtation with \$5-a-gallon gasoline the year before, and one could be forgiven for seeing a cosmic convergence taking shape.

The architectural historian James Marston Fitch wrote more than a half century ago that great leaps forward in architecture occur when three factors—theory, material, and technique—come into alignment under the pressure of social change. Such "golden moments of equilibrium," as he called them, are "brief in time, special in character, delicate in balance." He noted that such moments produced the Crystal Palace, the Brooklyn Bridge, and the Eiffel Tower.

We may be in one of those moments now, with notions of modern design, advances in green materials, and the technical imperatives of sustainability all converging toward a great leap in urban architecture. The architecture writer Andrew Blum has asked whether the Brad Pitt Houses could "become for the single-family green house what Seaside was for New Urbanism or Pacific Palisades was for California Modernism"—that is, a project that recasts the possible for

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New Orleans—moist, hot, with a fecund substrate that allows almost anything to propagate—has become a petri dish for ideas about housing and urban life.

Like Disney's House of the Future, but with reclaimed wood

the next generation of architects and developers. As seems fitting for such a moment, most of the construction projects under way in New Orleans are informed by seemingly conflicting strands of utopianism. But their designers are coming to some common, and edifying, conclusions.

This summer, I visited five of the new houses. I sat on their porches—New Orleans's original green technology, offering shade in summer and shelter during deluges, connecting the home with the street—and I considered a city in flux.

409 ANDRY STREET

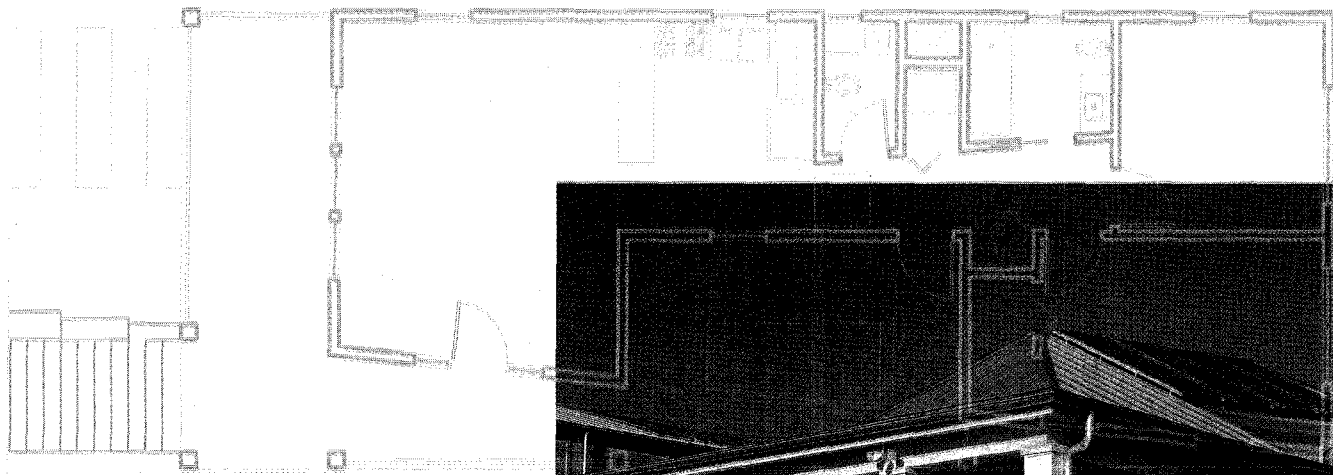
The front porch of the Global Green project house has an agreeable geometric purity—it's supported by two chopstick-thin columns angled outward on one side, and a shading screen of horizontal wood slats on the other. The porch roof slices at a slight downward angle into a narrow, two-story, pea-green shoebox, which looks as if its solar-paneled lid is being lifted by an unseen hand. Save for two nearly identical houses under construction next door, it resembles nothing else in the neighborhood, which consists of older shotguns and ranch houses.

Mike Lopez was sitting on the porch when I stopped by. He's the construction manager for Global Green, and he's been living in the house since it was completed more than a year ago. Today, it's mostly used as an eco-housing laboratory and visitor center, but eventually a displaced Lower Ninth Ward resident will move in. Until then, Lopez is figuring out what works and what doesn't. (Humidity-triggered bathroom fans, good; a grass roof in subtropical sun, not so

good.) This knowledge has already come in handy for the houses next door, and will also inform some of the design when the group breaks ground on an 18-unit green apartment building later this year.

Shortly after Katrina, Matt Petersen, Global Green's president and CEO, met Pitt at a Clinton Global Initiative meeting in New York City. They got to talking about New Orleans. Pitt, as readers of celebrity profiles know, is nutty for architecture. He has tinkered with models in Frank Gehry's studio, bought and restored Craftsman-style bungalows in Southern California, co-authored a book on a historic home, and been asked to help design an eco-hotel in Dubai. Regarding architecture, Pitt once told Oprah, "I'm really gay about the whole thing." When he filmed *Interview With the Vampire* in New Orleans years ago, he developed an abiding fondness for the place. Peterson and Pitt came up with an idea to stage an architectural competition for a model green house. Pitt put up some money and agreed to serve as the jury chairman, and Global Green acquired a 1.2-acre tract in the Holy Cross neighborhood of the Lower Ninth Ward. The competition attracted 125 entries from around the world. A young architectural team from New York called Workshop/apd won, and Global Green set about building its design.

The resulting house is a fine example of what you might call the Better Living Through Modern Green Design strain of utopianism, whose adherents argue that contemporary design and technology will conspire to free us from our grim, polluted past and usher in an era of efficiency and cleanliness. And I have to say, it's an appealing future. Several days



*In Brad Pitt's high-design utopia,
the electric meter runs backward.*

a week, the Global Green house opens for tours, and it's hard not to marvel at all the applied ingenuity, from the dual-flush toilets—number one gets a spritz, number two more hydraulic vigor—to the “green screen” of Carolina jasmine being trained to shade the south wall, to the thousand-gallon cistern intended to supply captured rainwater for toilet-flushing and plant care. The house is designed to be “net zero” energy-wise—that is, it produces as much electricity as it consumes each year. The utility closets are filled with the synapses that control the house's hi-tech appendages, and downstairs near the door is a touch-screen panel—the “Lucid Building Dashboard”—that monitors its brain waves like an EKG. It seemed to me every bit as marvelous as Disney's old House of the Future, but with reclaimed wood rather than white plastic.

1631 TENNESSEE STREET

Rosemary and Lloyd Griffin's front porch is low and broad, wrapping around two sides of their house and giving it a contemporary Creole-Caribbean feel. Their roof, a shiny steel pyramid lined with solar panels, looks slightly askew, like the Tin Man's hat. Rental cars roll slowly down the street, car windows descend, cameras emerge. A sign reading PRIVATE RESIDENCE has been hammered into the front lawn to keep the curious at bay—visitors occasionally mistake the house for a pavilion at some sort of world's fair and walk right in. Mrs. Griffin tells me she doesn't mind all the gawkers and the picture-taking. “I thank God for this,” she said, nodding at her new house. “This is something to be excited about.”

The Global Green project, it turned out, was just the beginning for Pitt. After Katrina he moved his family to New

Orleans to film *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* (and bought an 1830s mansion in the French Quarter). He saw the slow progress of the city's rebuilding firsthand and, looking to do more, picked up the phone.

“I got a call one day out of the blue from Brad Pitt,” says architect Bill McDonough. McDonough is the co-author, with the chemist Michael Braungart, of *Cradle to Cradle*, an influential manifesto calling for manufactured products and building materials that can be fully reused when they no longer serve their initial purpose. Pitt liked his thinking. “He'd read *Cradle to Cradle* and asked me if I wanted to do something together in New Orleans.”

McDonough said yes. So did others who got the call, including Graft, an architecture firm based in Los Angeles, and Cherokee Gives Back, a North Carolina-based foundation. Together, they established Make It Right, with the goal of constructing 150 new houses in the hard-hit area near the ruptured Industrial Canal flood wall—enough housing to feel like a neighborhood, they figured, as well as to entice additional investment along nearby streets. Pitt put up \$5 million, as did the philanthropist and movie producer Steve Bing. They've since raised enough to build about a hundred houses. Pitt contacted a group of noted architectural firms and asked them to contribute designs. Thirteen did, including Kieran Timberlake, Pugh + Scarpa, Adjaye Associates, MVRDV, and Morphosis. (Seven more firms have since signed on.)

The architects were given conditions hammered out in part during community meetings, some of which Pitt attended, where displaced residents described their vision of a new neighborhood. Among the criteria that emerged: use

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the city's existing narrow lots (that is, no aggregating lots and building large complexes—rumors had circulated after Katrina that Donald Trump wanted to buy the whole Lower Ninth); elevate houses out of the way of future flooding and include rooftop access to simplify rescue; feature prominent porches or front stoops for socializing; and use materials that are tough enough to survive hurricanes but that also approach “cradle to cradle” reusability. The standard house was to be 1,200 square feet, have three bedrooms and two baths, and cost no more than \$150,000. Homeowners would pay what they could, and the foundation would help with the rest. In the meantime, Make It Right started working with Lower Ninth families to clear up property-title issues (historically, many New Orleanians have acquired houses without paperwork showing a clean line of ownership), and to help with insurance settlements, payments from the federally funded Road Home program, and new financing.

The firms presented their preliminary designs for feedback. The people of the Lower Ninth voiced some displeasure—in particular, they didn't care for the flat roofs favored by modern designers. “A lot of residents said they looked like FEMA trailers,” said Steven Binger, the founder of Concoridia, a New Orleans architecture-and-planning firm, which designed the house selected by the Griffins. “Don't get me wrong—they were really hip. But the residents said: ‘A house has a sloped roof.’”

As the process unfolded—with designers bouncing their ideas off the people who would actually have to live in their creations—Binger sensed a welcome shift in his style-obsessed profession. “Community has to be the new titanium,” he said.

Two houses drew extra attention. Thom Mayne's house was designed to float out of harm's way in a flood. (Mayne's prototype was built by architecture students at UCLA, then trucked to New Orleans and reassembled.) And the Dutch firm MVRDV proposed a high-concept V-shaped house that looked not unlike the houses that had collapsed after Katrina. It's the only design not yet selected by a homebuyer.

Green high-design utopianism is virulent at Make It Right, as at Global Green, and all the houses feature sophisticated systems to achieve net-zero energy use. At an open house last year, a Make It Right organizer insisted that I go down and watch the electric meter running backward as solar energy coursed back into the grid. I stood around with a few others, murmuring appreciatively, as if witnessing a high-tech voodoo ceremony.

New residents undergo training on the operation of their homes, and receive a thick technical notebook and a smaller user's manual. They also get a dedicated phone number to call with problems; at the other end, a staffer will troubleshoot or send out a technician. I suggested to Tom Darden, the project's executive director, that this didn't seem to have much in the way of real-world application. But he shrugged and said it was part of the plan. Make It Right's mission includes testing new approaches and discarding those that fail, a luxury few for-profit developers can afford.

Biking through the neighborhood recently, I was heartened to hear all the hammering and sawing along Tennessee Street—the raspy calls of blackbirds in the overgrown lots of

the Lower Ninth are woeful and melancholy. With nearly 20 Make It Right houses occupied or under construction, a certain critical mass was forming. But I had to wonder: Why the need to cluster so many boisterous structures side by side? Any one of these homes would make for a striking neighborhood landmark, but together they just make noise, like an orchestra of timpani. But I suppose it's churlish to raise aesthetic concerns. BRAD PITT FOR MAYOR T-shirts are not uncommon around town. And people marvel at what Pitt has accomplished where so many others have failed, even if they admit, in a footnote, that the houses aren't their style.

“What we call historic design arose out of necessity,” said Darden, “and that's happening again.”

3428 DAUPHINE STREET

Not everybody is so circumspect. “Oh, it's all bullshit,” Andres Duany said to me last fall, when I brought up Make It Right. “The high design? That has nothing to do with reality. That's just architectural self-indulgence.”

Duany, it may come as no surprise, subscribes to another utopian worldview. He is a co-founder of the Congress for New Urbanism, and a persistent advocate for traditional small-town design. A generation ago, Duany and his wife, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, designed the landmark village at Seaside, Florida, and made a seemingly historic beach town suddenly materialize on an empty stretch of seacoast. (It was the setting for the movie *The Truman Show*.) He built his reputation in part on his porches; at Seaside, all houses were required to have them, to encourage community interaction.

The porch at 3428 Dauphine Street—in the historic Bywater neighborhood, just across the Industrial Canal from the Lower Ninth—is not very Duany-esque. It's more like a small deck, accessible only from the living room and enclosed by a tall wood-plank fence. This is a bit odd, since Duany designed it, but in a historically blue-collar neighborhood of stoops rather than porches, it makes contextual sense.

Duany has been involved with the rebuilding since just days after Katrina, most recently as part of Cypress Cottage Partners, a group that was awarded \$74.5 million by the state to come up with alternatives to the much-loathed FEMA trailer. The idea was to build prototype villages in communities along the Gulf Coast and see how they work. But the search for sufficiently large building lots has been fraught with headaches, so in the meantime Duany went ahead and built the Bywater houses on an empty corner lot with the help of an investor, in part to learn about how to build quickly and efficiently in New Orleans.

What resulted was a pair of duplexes, variations of what are locally called shotgun doubles. The houses, painted champagne yellow and olive khaki, have gables facing the street and, across the facade, an overhang that shields doors and windows against rain and sun. Duany's overhangs, compared with the ones on older houses in the neighborhood, are placed a bit too high, like someone wearing pants cinched near his chest. But they add a touch of grace to the streetscape, and without them the houses would look as if they were wearing no pants at all.

These homes illuminate the Your Elders Knew Best strain of utopianism, whose adherents argue that historic

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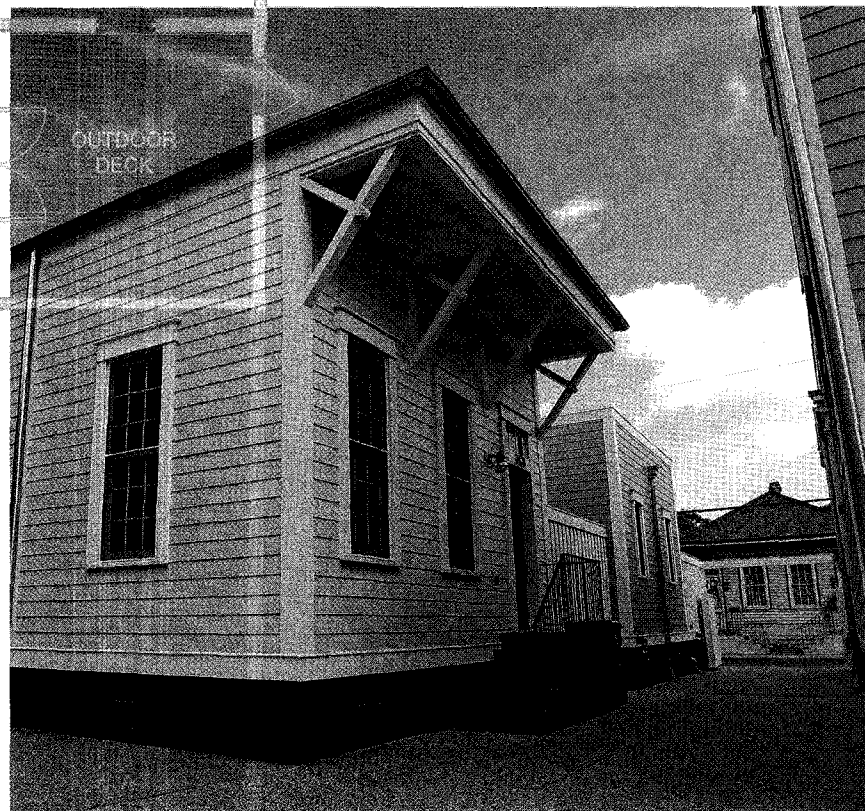
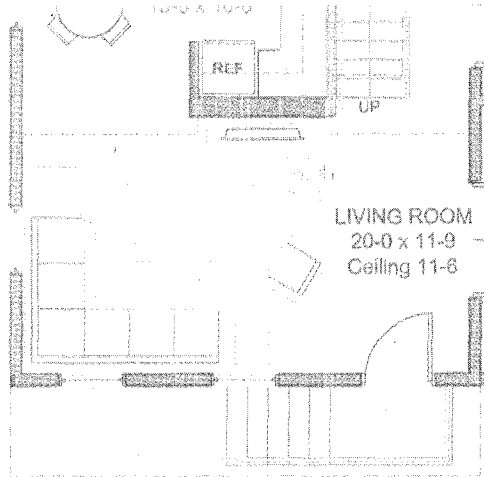
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**“The high design?
That has nothing to
do with reality,”
Andres Duany says.
“That’s just
architectural
self-indulgence.”**

Duany’s unobtrusive Bywater homes: ideal for “accumulating leisure”

neighborhoods are sacred texts from which one can learn, provided the language in which they were written is accurately translated. The future and its fancy technology distract from what’s really important: building human-scale environments with houses that quietly add to the conversation of the street, rather than yodeling and preening. Duany has largely succeeded in weaving his new homes into the block. One can bike past without noticing them, as I first did. As he explained in a neighborhood-association newsletter, “It is our hope that at least some parts of New Orleans can be rebuilt in the style to which its residents are accustomed—and not as a version of an Alabama trailer park or a suburb of Venice Beach, California.”

Duany is sometimes (and unfairly) likened to a monk laboriously transcribing the texts of the ancients without contributing new ideas for a new time. But style wasn’t what irked him when I brought up the Make It Right project. It was the whole way New Orleans was approaching rebuilding.

“When I originally thought of New Orleans, I was conditioned by the press to think of it as an extremely ill-governed city, full of ill-educated people, with a great deal of crime, a great deal of dirt, a great deal of poverty,” said Duany, who grew up in Cuba. “And when I arrived, I did indeed find it to be all those things. Then one day I was walking down the street and I had this kind of brain thing, and I thought I was in Cuba. Weird! And then I realized at that moment that New Orleans was not an American city, it was a Caribbean city. Once you recalibrate, it becomes the best-governed, cleanest, most efficient, and best-educated city in the Caribbean. New Orleans is actually the Geneva of the Caribbean.”

Duany said that many of the shotgun houses in New Orleans were built by the fathers and grandfathers of people living in them today, and few of them meet building codes. But no one worries about paying mortgages or insurance. “The situation is that the housing is essentially paid off, and it allows people to accumulate leisure,” he said. “What’s special about New Orleans is that it’s the only place in the United States where you can have a first-rate urban life for very little money.” What happened after Katrina, Duany said, was that FEMA and others came to town with detailed requirements for record-keeping and property titles, then insisted on stringent building codes that would make all the houses hurricane-proof. This might seem like common sense, he said, but it’s “essentially unworkable for a Caribbean city.”

So the central problem, according to Duany: “All the do-goody people attempting to preserve the culture are the same do-gooders who are raising the standards for the building of houses, and are the same do-gooders who are giving people partial mortgages and putting them in debt,” he said. “They have such a profound misunderstanding of the culture of the Caribbean that they’re destroying it. The heart of the tragedy is that New Orleans is not being measured by Caribbean standards. It’s being measured by Minnesota standards.”

As an alternative, Duany argues for “opt-out zones” for some of the hardest-hit areas, including the Lower Ninth. Within these zones, residents could rebuild their homes the way the city was originally constructed: by hand, incrementally, and unencumbered by what Duany calls “gold-plated” building regulations or bank requirements. Such zones exist

FLOOR PLAN: DUANY PLATER-ZYBERK & CO. LLC

in rural areas, he says, but haven't been tested in an urban context. He suggested that the money spent on the Better Living Through Modern Green Design homes would be far better spent on a widespread, low-cost self-building program. "The deal is, you can hammer something together any old way, but you won't have debt. That should be an option. Carrying debt requires a great deal of employment, which undermines a culture of leisure. The key is self-building," he told me, and added that it might arise somewhere else in the city, perhaps among the Latino construction workers who arrived on the heels of the storm. "It always emerges."

3105 LAW STREET

From his front porch, Mingko Aba can look across the street to the house where he was born 59 years ago. Actually, he's looking slightly downward at it, because his new house is built about five feet up, on piers. He also has a pretty good vantage point for seeing the progress in his Upper Ninth Ward neighborhood, which flooded but was spared the tsunami that swept homes off their foundations across the canal in the Lower Ninth after the levee broke.

Aba rode out Katrina at home, clambering up to his roof when the water reached his ceiling. The next day, a neighbor came with a boat that had drifted by, and the pair helped ferry

other stranded people to the top floor of a church, and then went looking for groceries. They picked pink grapefruit and blood oranges from the upper branches of Aba's citrus trees, and at a flooded corner store, they discovered that packaged food has an unadvertised advantage: it's airtight and bobs to the surface.

After spending three years in Alabama, Aba came back for his brother's funeral and decided it was time to rebuild. On a neighbor's suggestion, he contacted Build Now, a nonprofit founded in 2007 that helps homeowners navigate the whole process, from arranging to demolish your old house, to finding financing for the new one, to the actual construction.

Aba's new home, which he moved into earlier this year, is just 14 feet wide, but it has a restrained grandeur, like a miniature Greek temple on a mount. On the outside, with its rectangular columns and tall triangular pediment, it's all but indistinguishable from the Greek Revival shotgun houses found on narrow lots throughout the city's older neighborhoods.

The historic design is not by accident. William Monaghan, the architect and developer who founded Build Now, is another representative of the utopianism that sees salvation in the architectural grammar of a historic city. "There's a place for everything, and it's great that people are doing all kinds



Build Now's houses look like old New Orleans houses—that's why people love them.

of design, but I wanted to fit in with the neighborhood character,” he said. “I didn’t want to try to get somebody to move back to New Orleans and make all those decisions and sink all that money into something, and then say, ‘Oh yes, and you also have to be challenged by unfamiliar architecture.’”

Monaghan, who grew up in New Orleans and is now based in New York, had been appalled at the city’s anemic rebuilding efforts during his visits home after Katrina. So he founded a nonprofit with the slogan “Build new. Build high. Build now.” The idea was to provide one-stop shopping for traditional, reasonably priced homes for the displaced. Complete houses, including appliances, begin at about \$100,000, without land or foundation work.

Monaghan set out to create eight prototype homes based on classic New Orleans styles. “Having lived there so long, I thought I knew everything,” he said. “I’m an architect, I’ve done a lot of historic preservation work. I thought I’d just design some houses that look like New Orleans houses.”

That proved trickier than he’d thought. He explored the city with tape measure in hand, conducting a sort of architectural phrenology to figure out the proportions and details that make New Orleans houses so New Orleans—the depths of the porches, the sizes of the pediments, the angles of the hip roofs, the ratios of height to width. It turned out that while these measurements tended to be quirky and irregular, they made a lot of sense for the culture and climate of New Orleans. For instance, almost every old house has tall ceilings that allow residents to live below the worst of the summer heat. Single shotgun cottages lack hallways, allowing for efficient cross-ventilation in every room. And many center-hall cottages use transoms to make the walls porous and keep the air moving. “You sort of take this stuff for granted,” Monaghan said, “but it’s a tremendous environmental response.”

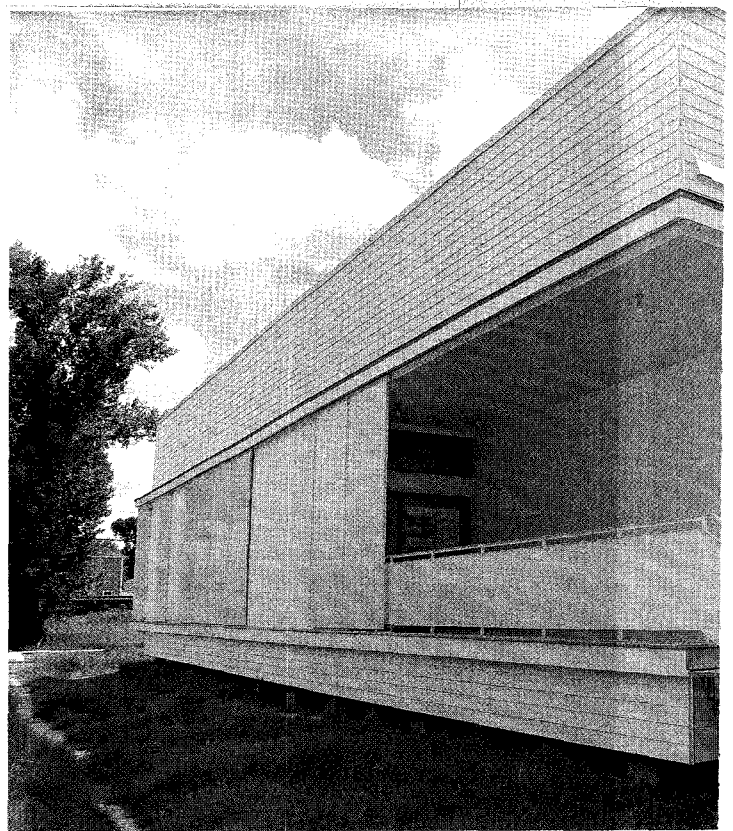
Monaghan built a model house and started staging community events, like crawfish boils, to get the word out. People found him; they’ve contracted for 16 homes to date, and Monaghan has since designed six new models based on requests from buyers.

The great appeal of Build Now is its utter simplicity. Recreating a home from the past seems a needed balm for this wounded city. Where Duany seems to want to harness his projects to a broader crusade, Monaghan’s mission is more straightforward: build houses that New Orleanians have shown, through a process of architectural natural selection spanning more than a century, that they love.

“What we’re learning is that these traditions are not just fashions,” said Michael Mehaffy of Sustasis. “They’re rooted in the real adaptive evolution of a place.”

2036 SEVENTH STREET

URBANbuild Prototype 04 in New Orleans’s Central City neighborhood was completed last spring. You might pass Duany’s or Monaghan’s homes without noticing them. Not this one. It’s a gleaming white box sitting flush against two streets on a corner lot, hung with large sliding panels of polycarbonate plastic. It looks like the package in which one of the Victorian shotguns nearby was delivered, and the sheer incongruity of the thing made me laugh when I first saw it. But loitering on the back porch—basically a deep rectangular



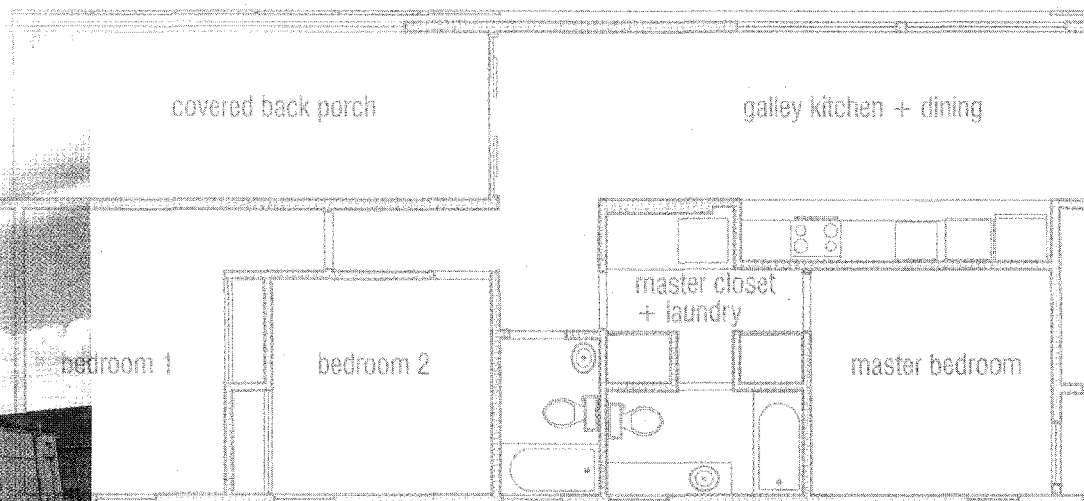
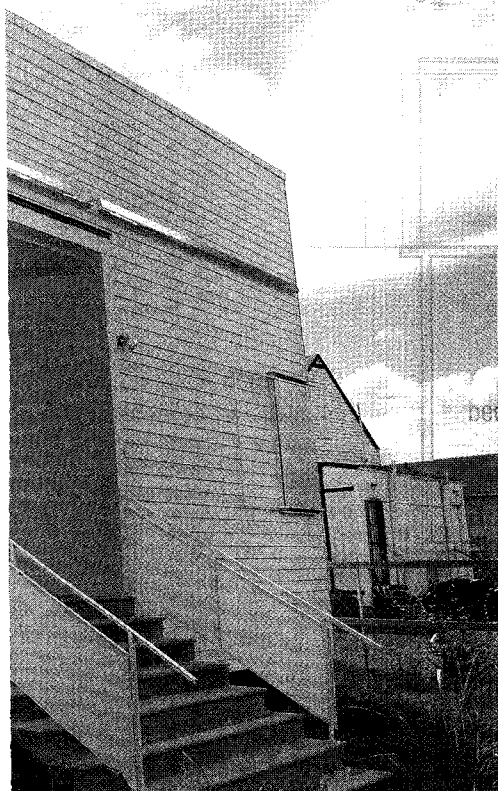
cut taken out of one corner of the box—I found it impossible not to feel part of the neighborhood, perhaps more so than at any of the other new houses I’d visited.

This is one of four homes developed since Katrina by the URBANbuild studio at the Tulane School of Architecture. (The third house was featured in a reality-TV series on the Sundance Channel last year.) Some 25 students worked to design and build it; electrical, plumbing, HVAC, and drywall work were contracted out. Standing on a crime-racked block of the city, it has the feel of guerrilla architecture, built in defiance of its surroundings.

The students started with the concept of sliding plastic panels, which, in theory, will withstand the pummeling of a hurricane. They then took some of the common architectural vocabulary of New Orleans—shutters, porch, front stoop—and distilled them to their essential elements, adding exaggerations of scale and splashes of color (the segments of the box cut away for the stoop and porches are painted lime green). Even so, the house is practical, like a cabinet from IKEA—when not locked into position for hurricanes, the panels can be moved around for privacy, or to shade the porches from sun.

“We’re trying to get the students to be inventive, creating ideas that maybe other people can mimic,” says Byron Mouton, the Tulane professor who directs the studio. All of the houses are aggressively contemporary in style. Reaction has been divided among residents: in general, the older generation hates them, and younger folks think they’re fly.

Scott Bernhard, director of the Tulane City Center, which has worked with URBANbuild and other community projects at Tulane, defended the style. “To me, it’s respectful of the old buildings to be attentive to scale or urban pattern, but it’s not respectful of those old buildings to imitate,” he said. “In some ways, imitation and mockery are too close together.



URBANbuild Prototype 04: the kids think it's fly.

To us, having a gabled roof at the front of the building is far less important than engaging the street.”

TWO YEARS AGO, at a conference on traditional building held at the New Orleans convention center, the architect and New Urbanist Steve Mouzon asked a crowd of contractors and architects to think about a basic point. “The very core of sustainability,” he said, “can be found in a simple question: ‘Can it be loved?’”

All those solar panels from the first eco-boom in the 1970s, and those clunky, angular houses they sat atop? Most are demolished and gone. “The carbon footprint of a building is meaningless once its parts are carted off to a landfill in a generation or two,” Mouzon told the crowd. The rebuilding of New Orleans by the people who love it, he suggested, may provide the most lasting green lesson of all.

New Orleans remains a traumatized city: 65,000 homes still sit unoccupied, the population is still down by about a quarter, rents are up by 40 percent, and violent crime is endemic. But the strong and enduring interest in rebuilding here—and the steady trickle of residents moving back, along with the unabated flow of volunteers coming to help out—shows that it is a place people care deeply about. That fact should not be overlooked.

Consider that Habitat for Humanity has nearly completed its high-profile Musicians’ Village in the Upper Ninth Ward, including a cluster of 72 attractive, small, traditional-style homes conceived by the New Orleans natives Branford Marsalis and Harry Connick Jr. And that another New Orleanian, the actor Wendell Pierce, has established a non-profit with plans to build hundreds of environmentally friendly homes in badly flooded Pontchartrain Park, where he grew up. In nearby Gentilly, Project Home Again, founded

by Barnes & Noble Chairman Leonard Riggio, has put up \$20 million to build elevated bungalows for former residents, and the Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana has funded the construction of 21 low-cost modern shotguns in Central City.

Meanwhile, the city’s 270 or so neighborhood associations, once little more than social clubs dabbling in the occasional crime-watch program, have become increasingly sophisticated in the language of rebuilding and partnering with outside experts—whether from charities, the business world, or even Hollywood. This isn’t exactly the bottom-up self-building that Andres Duany envisions. But neither is it Robert Moses-style planning from on high. A community-driven, middle-out planning style has emerged, and the kind of housing it seems to favor fuses smart modern design with the city’s traditional notions of space, leisure, and community. As with jazz, gumbo, and some remarkable cocktails, this style illustrates the city’s talent for crafting extraordinary things from the ordinary stuff it has at hand.

New Orleans can offer plenty of lessons in green living—and it could have before the storm, had anyone asked. How to build beautiful small houses on narrow lots. How to build compact, walkable neighborhoods. How to adapt buildings to the environment, with deep porches and high ceilings and small, leafy yards. These are the things that people loved about New Orleans—and they’re the things that architects interested in sustainable design most want to build right now. The past here has much to inform the future, not just for New Orleans, but for an entire country that needs to rethink the way it designs its cities and homes. New Orleans won’t be rushed—it never is—but the chances are good that whatever results here will be loved. ■

Wayne Curtis is an Atlantic contributing editor.

THE SUN REVOLVES AROUND THE EARTH.

ANIMAL SPECIES NEVER CHANGE.

BLACK PEOPLE ARE INFERIOR TO WHITE PEOPLE.

THE GOVERNMENT CAN'T PROVIDE HEALTH INSURANCE TO OLD FOLKS.

HUMANS CAN'T FLY TO THE MOON.

TELEPHONES ARE ONLY FOR TALKING AND LISTENING.

Some of these assumptions had the force of science behind them, others just the force of habit, but all of them seem ridiculous in retrospect. All of them collapsed only because someone had the courage to step outside the consoling, persuading flow of tradition and ask fundamental questions about why things are the way they are, and how they might be instead. *The Atlantic* has always aspired to challenge its readers, and its times, by giving voice to some of the most provocative thinkers of their eras. Brave thinking, from Henry David Thoreau's blunt naturalism to Martin Luther King's

calls for justice, can be unsettling. But it drives society forward. Now, in our first annual Brave Thinkers issue, we have identified a small group of men and women who have risked their careers, reputations, fortunes, and in some cases, even lives to advance ideas that upend an established order. Why 27? Because after months of research, tabulation, and debate about hundreds of candidates, that's how many we could agree on. Some of them may prove to be wrong, and others wrong-headed. But all of them embody the kind of courage that stirs the spirit and inspires us to think for ourselves.

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BRAVET



BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS

THORKIL SONNE

CEO AND FOUNDER OF SPECIALISTERNE

After his son Lars was diagnosed with autism in the late 1990s, Sonne had an epiphany. Autistics tend to have poor social skills and difficulty responding to stress or changes, which makes finding work a challenge (one study suggests that only 6 percent of autistic adults have full-time employment). But Sonne realized that they also tend to be methodical, possess excellent memories, and show great attention to detail and tolerance for repetition—in other words, they might make excellent software testers.

With this in mind, Sonne launched Specialisterne, in Copenhagen, in 2004. Thirty-seven of its 51 employees have autism (though most have a mild form called Asperger's syndrome). The firm now pulls in \$2 million a year in revenue and serves clients like Microsoft and CSC. Sonne refuses to run the company like a charity: he competes in the open market and aims to make a profit. This makes government support unlikely, but it may lead to a sustainable new model for companies with disabled employees: Harvard Business School now uses Specialisterne as a case study in social-enterprise business. People on the autistic spectrum are not superhuman memory machines; but neither are they incapable of work. Sonne treats them as employees with strengths and weaknesses that smart employers should respect—and capitalize on.

BEN BERNANKE

CHAIRMAN OF THE FEDERAL RESERVE

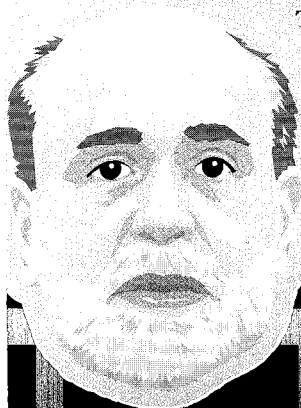
The political focus on the federal stimulus package and Bernanke's own professorial mildness have deflected attention from how radically the Fed chief has acted. He dropped target interest rates to near-zero for the first time in history; made trillions of dollars in government cash available to financial institutions; expanded the Fed's lending and relaxed its collateral requirements; bought up billions of dollars in securities backed by consumer debt and mortgages; prevented the collapse of AIG, Fannie Mae, and Freddie Mac; and somehow found time to bear the made-for-TV harangues of financially illiterate members of Congress.

The particulars of the Fed's interventions remain lamentably shielded from oversight. But in the Great Recession, Bernanke's forceful approach may have spared the world a true nightmare.

MORGAN TSVANGIRAI

PRIME MINISTER OF ZIMBABWE

Despite being beaten, threatened with assassination, and repeatedly thrown in jail, Tsvangirai continued to criticize Robert Mugabe's victory in last year's rigged election, and angry crowds eventually propelled him into a power-sharing deal. The new government has since brought hyperinflation under control, the stock market has reopened and surged in value, and the IMF says there are "signs of a nascent economic recovery." A raging cholera epidemic has subsided and civil servants are finally being paid again. Tsvangirai is no saint: he's been heavy-handed and dishonest in intraparty squabbles, and made oblique threats of popular violence. But he has reasoned throughout his career that patience and a professed commitment to the high moral ground would enable him ultimately to triumph, and that Mugabe's brutality and ineptitude would be his undoing. And that reasoning, more than anything else, may have averted an all-out civil war.



THINKERS

HEALTH AND MEDICINE

CAMILLE PARMESAN

PROFESSOR, UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

Parmesan spent the first half of the 1990s tracking the Edith's checkerspot butterfly—an unlikely basis, perhaps, for a revolution in conservation biology. She found that the butterfly—which is sensitive to temperature—had declined in lower-latitude areas, but was coping in Canada. In a landmark 2006 article in the *Annual Review of Ecology, Evolution, and Systematics*, Parmesan presented evidence that the butterfly's shifting habitat was not an aberration: plants and animals were moving northward and up to higher altitudes; those species that could not move, like the polar bear, were in declining health or dying out. By 2050, according to one estimate, nearly 40 percent of the species on Earth could face extinction because of climate change. Parmesan and some of her colleagues are now considering a radical solution: humans stepping in to move imperiled species far out of harm's way. Potential drawbacks abound: species may not adapt well to their new environment, or they may adapt all too well and ravage a fragile ecosystem. But throughout history, flora and fauna have changed their habitat to adjust to climate fluctuations, and humans have helped them in some cases. If the gray wolf can flourish again in Yellowstone, why not tigers in Africa?



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SCIENCE AND
TECHNOLOGY

SHAI AGASSI

FOUNDER OF BETTER PLACE

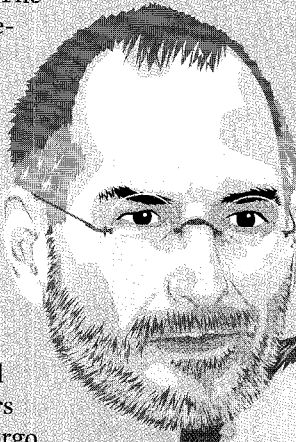
Electric cars would make everyone happy. They don't pollute, they can be powered using renewable energy like wind and solar, and they'd undermine nasty oil-rich regimes. The problem has always been how to charge them: electric cars can typically travel only 50 miles or so without a recharge. Agassi, a former executive at the software giant SAP, has a solution that will lead either to acclaim and fortune, or to a very expensive, and public, failure. He hopes to create a national electric-car infrastructure that consists of charging stations where motorists could plug in to refuel, along with switching stations where they could swap out old batteries for new ones during longer trips. Agassi has backing from Renault-Nissan, and has inked deals with governments in Israel, Denmark, Japan, Canada, and the United States to start testing roadside stations. He intends to make electric cars the standard way society travels in the 21st century. It helps that he (and his investors) may make a lot of money doing so: they plan to lease the batteries to consumers and charge them a fixed amount per mile driven, much the way mobile-phone companies now operate. For the big car companies, almost all of which have electric-car initiatives under way, this could eliminate a huge hurdle to innovation.



STEVE JOBS AND JOHN LASSETER

CO-FOUNDER AND CHIEF CREATIVE OFFICER, PIXAR ANIMATION STUDIOS

An unusual thing happened at the Cannes Film Festival this year: the glamorous conclave of high-minded cineastes opened with a cartoon. A 3-D cartoon, in fact. The audience loved it. *Up*, Pixar's 10th creation, achieved critical and commercial success with nuance and narrative originality, rather than pretense and crudity, and Jobs and Lasseter, the driving forces behind the digital-animation studio, deserve the credit. Over the past two decades, the pair has combined technological foresight with an infamously perfectionist ethos to produce well-loved movies, from *Toy Story* to *Wall-E*. Now owned by Disney, Pixar is a commercial colossus. But its movies still feature characters that grapple with real problems and undergo subtle and plausible moral development; they still eschew the violence, prurience, and stupidity that has infiltrated children's movies over the past decade. In short, Pixar has the courage to respect the intelligence of the people watching its films. Even if their feet don't reach the theater floor.



INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

MONTGOMERY MCFATE

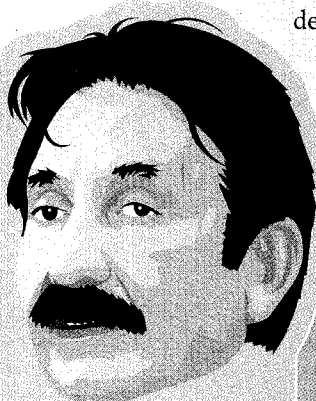
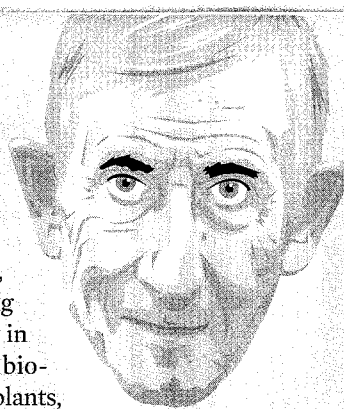
SENIOR SOCIAL SCIENTIST AT
THE HUMAN TERRAIN SYSTEM

In the darkest days of the Iraq War, one scenario seemed constantly to replay itself: Iraqi drivers would unaccountably fail to stop when ordered to at checkpoints, and American soldiers, fearing a suicide bombing, would open fire—sometimes killing innocents. One possible reason was a devastatingly simple cultural confusion: the American gesture for “stop”—arm straight, palm out—means “welcome” in Iraq. “This and similar misunderstandings have deadly consequences,” McFate wrote in *Joint Force Quarterly* in 2005. The Pentagon recruited McFate, a cultural anthropologist, to help troops avoid such mistakes and learn about the cultures of those they're ostensibly assisting. She helped develop the Human Terrain System, which provides, in a database, everything a soldier in the field might find useful to know about a foreign culture—from tribal structure, to local water issues, to regional quirks of language and mannerism. Although the social sciences have historically had an uneasy, if not hostile, relationship with the military, the system also embeds anthropologists, sociologists, and linguists with combat units to help them communicate and navigate tricky cultural terrain. Despite the inevitable recruitment and retention problems, and several civilian-scientist casualties, the military credits the program with a measurable decline in the need for combat operations. And though McFate has endured intense criticism from her peers in academia (the American Anthropological Association worries that the program could lead to subjects' being studied without their “informed consent”), General David Petraeus used McFate's work in his counterinsurgency manual and the Army now assigns social scientists to serve with combat brigades in Iraq and Afghanistan.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY **FREEMAN DYSON**

PROFESSOR EMERITUS, INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY, PRINCETON

Dyson, a renowned physicist and pioneer in quantum electrodynamics theory, has lately committed a heresy without equal in modern science: questioning climate-change orthodoxy. Dyson doesn't deny that excess carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is warming the planet. But he predicts that advances in biotechnology—especially the creation of genetically engineered carbon-eating plants, which he foresees within two decades—will mitigate the damage with a minimum of economic and social disruption. In the meantime, he argues that large-scale carbon-restricting approaches like the Kyoto Protocol are ineffective and disproportionately hurt developing countries like China and India, where the potential to lift millions of people out of poverty now hinges on access to carbon-spewing industries. Such arguments have won him few friends; he describes the interaction between the majority of scientists holding conventional climate-change views and the skeptical minority as a “dialogue of the deaf.” But in Dyson's case, at least, those arguments have evolved from a lifetime of scientific rigor and intellectual honesty.



INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS **IFTIKHAR CHAUDHRY**

CHIEF JUSTICE OF PAKISTAN

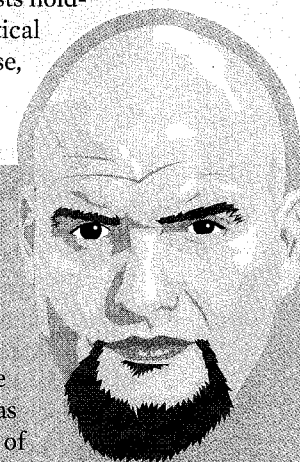
Chaudhry was expelled from Pakistan's Supreme Court and arrested in 2007 after demanding more government accountability and resisting the growing power of then-President Pervez Musharraf. A historic two-year protest by the country's lawyers—made famous by televised images of police tear-gassing men in business suits—eventually prompted his full reinstatement in March. Chaudhry has ruled against the crooked privatization of government assets, agitated for human-rights reform, and investigated illegal detentions by Pakistan's military and intelligence agencies. Though criticized for his temper and self-aggrandizement, Chaudhry has come to personify Pakistani hopes for an independent judiciary, the rule of law, and an end to the arbitrary authority exercised, often violently, by the country's political and military elite.



SOCIETY **JOHN FETTERMAN**

MAYOR OF BRADDOCK, PENNSYLVANIA

Braddock, the site of Andrew Carnegie's first steel mill, was once a beacon to immigrants. But it would be hard—maybe impossible—to find a city that's worse off now: riddled with crime and violence, Braddock has lost 90 percent of its population and is on the brink of total abandonment. Fetterman, a young and heavily tattooed giant with a public-policy degree from Harvard and a mountain of ambition, wants to save the city by luring artists and small businesses with loft apartments, cheap rent, and other inducements. He imagines Braddock—only a few miles from Pittsburgh—as a community for creative types and eco-friendly businesses, filled with public gardens and culture centers. It's an utterly idealistic experiment in extreme urban renewal with next to zero financial backing—one that could totally fail, or perhaps serve as a model for other devastated industrial towns.



MEDIA **ARTHUR SULZBERGER JR.**

PUBLISHER OF *THE NEW YORK TIMES*

The Times employs 11 people to moderate online comments, more than twice the number of reporters on the masthead at The Huffington Post. One might mistake such quality control for timidity, or for an anachronistic journalistic indulgence. But even as Sulzberger has aggressively led *The Times* onto the Web, he is betting that his paper's dedication to high-quality journalism is its most valuable asset, however costly it now seems. He has resisted deep newsroom cuts even as the company's stock has collapsed, and he has risked alienating the younger generation of Sulzbergers, who may sell their premium shares (and the voting rights they confer) to the highest bidders. Such a sale could lead to ruin: one need only browse a recent edition of the *Los Angeles Times* or the *Chicago Tribune* to see what happens when putatively savvy capitalists insist on slashing news budgets to increase profit margins.

SOCIETY

CRAIG WATKINS

DALLAS DISTRICT ATTORNEY



Prosecutors are not typically inclined to free lots of prisoners, especially in Texas. But Watkins, the state's first black DA, has made a name for himself by crusading to free those who've been wrongly convicted—and in Dallas County, long known for its prosecutorial fervor, it turns out there are a lot of them. Watkins created a Conviction Integrity Unit to reassess questionable sentences using DNA testing, and since he came to office, 12 wrongly convicted prisoners have been exonerated, including James Woodard, who unjustly spent 27 years behind bars for the rape and murder of his girlfriend. Woodard is part of a disturbing trend: in the past two decades, 38 people have been exonerated in Texas, more than anywhere else in the country. Watkins clearly enjoys the spotlight—the Discovery Channel is filming his progress—and if more media attention leads to the overturning of more wrongful convictions, so much the better.

HEALTH AND MEDICINE

HENRY GREELY

DIRECTOR OF THE STANFORD CENTER FOR LAW AND THE BIOSCIENCES

On some college campuses, 25 percent of students buy drugs like Ritalin and Adderall to help them study. Not a problem, says Greely, who advocates easier access to such “cognition-enhancing” pills and considers their use no more unnatural for students trying to improve their grades than the use of computers, sleep, or coffee. In an article in *Nature*, Greely and his colleagues argued that the drugs “should be viewed in the same general category as education, good health habits, and information technology—ways that our uniquely innovative species tries to improve itself.”

We may recoil at the effort to treat things like sloth and indiscipline as pathologies instead of personal failings (not to mention at the effort of drug companies to package that “improvement”). But we accept without question many cognitive enhancements—from encyclopedias to calculators to the Internet—unavailable to previous generations of students. Reconciling these legitimate and conflicting impulses will be one of the primary public-policy challenges of the years ahead. Revolutionary advances in our understanding of brain chemistry are on the horizon, and society should be prepared, morally and legally, for a future in which much more powerful “smart drugs” are easily available.

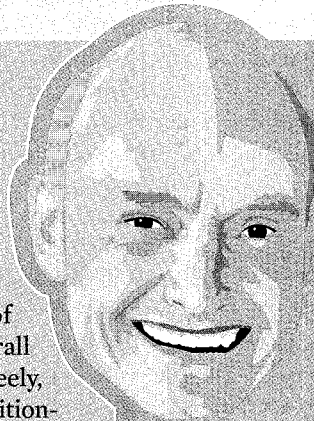


MEDIA

WALTER E. HUSSMAN JR.

PUBLISHER OF THE ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

Hussman began charging for online access to his newspaper in 2002—and the paper remains profitable, with circulation higher than a decade ago. Once, he seemed like a lonely holdout against the future. Now, newspapers and magazines that have lowered their firewalls are looking at raising them again, emulating his revolutionary economic strategy of asking customers to pay money for a product.



POLITICS

RALPH NADER

PERENNIAL THIRD-PARTY PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE

Many on the left considered Nader's candidacy in 2000 a brave stand against a dangerously homogenized two-party system. But much of their admiration curdled after Al Gore was denied the presidency, and as Nader went on to undermine John Kerry and Barack Obama. Throughout, however, Nader has evangelized under the slogan “There's too much power and wealth in too few hands.” After the financial collapse—and the banker-friendly responses of both Bush and Obama—Nader's ideas, on this score at least, increasingly seem vindicated. His recent crusades have made him deeply unpopular and cost him respect he had built over a lifetime as a consumer advocate and environmentalist. But if anyone is entitled to say “I told you so” following the government's handouts to the likes of AIG, Citigroup, and Bank of America, surely it's the Unreasonable Man.



LEADERS AND ECONOMICS

SHEILA C. BAIR

CHAIRMAN OF THE FEDERAL
DEPOSIT INSURANCE CORPORATION

For years, Bair was one of the only voices in Washington warning about the dangers posed to the economy by deteriorating lending standards. The Kansas Republican has overseen the (more or less) orderly dissolution of more than 100 failed commercial banks since her appointment in 2006. As more banks failed and the public panicked, Bair persuaded Congress to boost the FDIC's borrowing authority and increased the amount of private deposits the government insures to \$250,000 per account. She got banks to pay more into the FDIC insurance fund, oversaw a program to insure their debts, and helped develop the Public-Private Investment Program to buy up mortgage-backed securities. She also pushed to empower a council of top regulators to oversee "too big to fail" institutions and prevent them from threatening the stability of the financial system. Bair has made mistakes—like bungling the Wachovia takeover. But since the collapse, she has stood up in Washington for beleaguered homeowners and persistently confronted the influence that the big Wall Street banks wield. "If anything is to be learned from this financial crisis, it is that market discipline must be more than a philosophy to ward off appropriate regulation during good times," Bair told Congress in July. "It must be enforced during difficult times."



BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS

PAUL POLAK

FOUNDER OF INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
ENTERPRISES AND D-REV

Criticizing charities and development groups—for bloat, condescension, or naïveté—can be a convenient excuse to forget about the excruciating reality of poverty and inequality. But not for Polak, whose complaint with conventional charities is that they fail to consider the market potential of the world's 1.2 billion poor people. Treating the poor as potential consumers and entrepreneurs, he believes, is the best way to help them achieve self-sufficiency. Operating under the guideline "Cheap is beautiful," his companies sell affordable and useful tools—like manual-treadle pumps for irrigation, or solar-powered water purifiers—that poor people can use to make a living selling products to their peers. For instance, a farmer who buys a treadle pump for \$8 can use it to transport groundwater to his fields during the dry season, when crops fetch higher prices, and quickly recoup his investment at the local market. Polak thinks that profitable markets in impoverished areas will spur more prosperity than offering direct donations, financing large infrastructure projects, or relying on government initiatives. "The single most important thing they need to get out of poverty is to find a way to earn more money," he writes in his book, *Out of Poverty*. "This is so obvious that people tell me that it is a perfect example of circular logic. But the sad fact is that it isn't at all obvious to the great majority of the world's poverty experts."

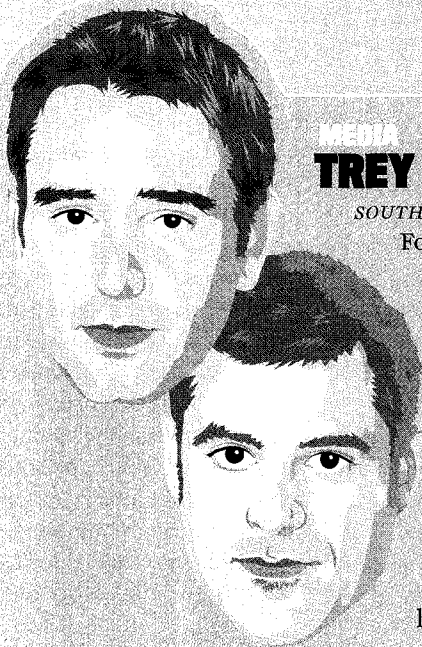


MEDIA

TREY PARKER AND MATT STONE

SOUTH PARK CREATORS

For 12 years, the pair has produced one of the best satires on television, while achieving new standards of vulgarity and political incorrectness. Parker and Stone have risked alienating advertisers and audiences alike with an ambitious, comprehensive offensiveness that lampoons the tired culture war and the cycle of moralizing protest and hypocritical hyperventilating it sets in motion. In the process, they've shown that there's an audience for smart political satire, even (or perhaps especially) when it's expressed by foul-mouthed, poorly animated schoolchildren: the show remains the highest-rated offering on Comedy Central. That popularity recently led the pair to seal with the network a groundbreaking \$75 million digital deal—in which they receive 50 percent of online ad revenue and help spread *South Park* content through mobile devices, video games, and various Web-based iterations—that could offer a model for other TV programs whose online success has thus far benefited only pirates.



BARACK OBAMA

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

In certain quarters—Venezuela, Central Asia, France—the nationalization of industry attracts little notice. Not so in the United States: in yielding to the supplications of the auto companies for help, Obama made an enormous gamble only a few months into his presidency—and he went all in. Withstanding intense scrutiny and criticism, Obama asserted unprecedented government control over America's once-totemic industry. He committed billions in taxpayer dollars to GM and Chrysler, ousted Rick Wagoner and much of GM's board, ordered Chrysler to merge with Fiat, and forced the sale of both companies through bankruptcy court in a time frame no one previously thought possible. He also wrangled concessions from bondholders and the autoworkers' union (the former more aggressively than the latter), backed new-car warranties, halved the number of GM's domestic brands, and demanded the closing of failing plants and dealerships. He told both companies to improve the fuel efficiency of their fleets, and backed them up by offering \$2 billion to boost electric-car production and stimulating demand through the cash-for-clunkers program. "This industry is like no other," Obama said. "It's an emblem of the American spirit; a once and future symbol of America's success." If this industry should still fail, he owns it. And not just symbolically.



SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

MARK ZUCKERBERG

FOUNDER AND CEO OF FACEBOOK

Zuckerberg turned down \$1 billion from Yahoo for the networking site he famously built in his dorm room—perhaps the most audacious in a series of decisions he's made that narrowly split the difference between bravery and folly. History (and his creditors) will judge Zuckerberg's business acumen, but he's clearly a genius at shaping the online world. By encouraging users to divulge real information about themselves to their "friends"—as opposed to creating an idealized online persona—he overcame privacy fears and made Facebook into a legitimate community. And by opening up the site to outside software developers, he made it a successful platform for reaching customers with new applications. But Zuckerberg has repeatedly shown that he's willing to offend his vast customer base in pursuit of a profit, introducing an invasive news-feed feature, allowing businesses to infiltrate the site and follow users' habits, and applying a Twitter-like redesign. And he has rarely backed down in the face of popular protests. When you're giving your product away for free, who's to say the customers are always right?



SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

DANNY DAY

FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT OF EPRIDA

Indigenous tribes of the Amazon Basin had a neat trick for sequestering carbon: they buried a combination of animal by-products and charcoal in their fields, which made their crops grow in abundance. Thousands of years later, that soil, known as "terra preta," remains exceptionally fertile—and rich in carbon. Day believes that this process could be the key to relieving the atmosphere of its burgeoning levels of carbon dioxide. He and others advocate expanded use of a material called biochar, which results when organic waste—like peanut shells or chicken excrement—is cooked in a special container that limits its exposure to oxygen. This process creates small pellets of charcoal (biochar) that lock in the carbon from the cooked organic matter—preventing it from escaping back into the atmosphere—and generates gases that can be used as fuel. When the biochar is buried in the right agricultural areas, it enriches the soil, increases crop yields, and keeps the carbon trapped beneath the ground. The NASA climate expert James Hansen says that the carbon could be stored for "centuries to millennia." Eprida hopes to use the biochar to soak up carbon dioxide at polluting factories and then bury it in areas with poor soil quality—potentially addressing two grave problems with one elegant solution.



POETICS JIM WEBB

SENATOR FROM VIRGINIA

After squeaking into his seat in 2006, Webb became an activist for prison reform—an issue almost universally unpopular among voters, especially in a tough-on-crime state like Virginia. He introduced a bill in March that would establish a commission to review the nation's prison system. A small step, certainly. But he's taking on public apathy and a thriving privatized-prison industry that houses nearly 10 percent of federal and state prisoners and lobbies politicians with vigor. Webb has called our prison system a "national disgrace," and he's right: the U.S. incarcerates 2.3 million people (25 percent of the planet's prisoners), and monitors another 5 million on probation or parole (more than 60 percent of whom will end up back in the clink). Huge numbers of inmates are mentally ill and more than 20 percent have been sexually abused while locked up; meanwhile the number of drug offenders behind bars (where they take up scarce space and resources) has increased by 1,200 percent since 1980. By tackling prison reform as a freshman senator, Webb has shown he possesses two things vanishingly rare in Congress: a conscience and a spine.



INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS ALEX de WAAL

PROGRAM DIRECTOR AT THE SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH COUNCIL

The world's foremost authority on Sudan and the war that has engulfed it since 2003, de Waal was nearly alone among Westerners in arguing that the International Criminal Court should not bring war-crimes charges against Omar Hassan al-Bashir, the dictator responsible for many of the conflict's 300,000 deaths. De Waal warned that al-Bashir was likely to react violently, that rebel groups would be emboldened to violate hard-won peace agreements, that the ICC had no way to enforce its indictment, and that the whole thing would be a spectacle for the benefit of Western audiences and would only further destabilize the country. Sure enough, when al-Bashir's warrant was issued in March, Sudan shut down human-rights groups and international aid agencies (including Oxfam and Save the Children), seized their assets, and declared, "For us, the ICC doesn't exist." De Waal's argument was of a piece with his life-long thinking: aggressive international intervention, however well-intentioned (and however consistent with the concept of "Never again"), is often ineffective or horrifically counterproductive. After years of chronicling the horrors of modern Africa—from genocide to extreme poverty to the ravages of AIDS—he believes that ignorant grassroots activism often hinders delicate political compromises and that "salvation delusion" blinds idealistic foreign governments to the hopelessness of military intervention. "When peace and justice clash, as they do in Sudan today," he wrote in a recent op-ed, "peace must prevail."

TELEVISION JEFF ZUCKER

PRESIDENT AND CEO
OF NBC UNIVERSAL

Zucker wooed Jay Leno to stay with the network when his run on *The Tonight Show* ended, and to move into prime time. Leno's new program will compete directly with popular scripted dramas like *CSI*—a huge gamble for a talk show. But if cheap and easily produced fare like Leno's works in prime time, it could completely change the dynamics of network television. Or it could bomb.



BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS MEREDITH WHITNEY

FOUNDER AND CEO OF MEREDITH WHITNEY
ADVISORY GROUP LLC

In October 2007, as an analyst at Oppenheimer & Company, Whitney noted something strange about Citigroup's finances: the banking behemoth was paying more in dividends than it was making in profits. She argued that it would need to find \$30 billion by raising capital, paying out less to shareholders, or selling assets. Almost alone among the more than 20 analysts then covering Citi, she recommended that investors sell its stock. Her now-famous report—titled "Is Citigroup's Dividend Safe? Downgrading Stock Due to Capital Concerns"—triggered hundreds of billions of dollars in stock-market losses and subjected her to hate mail, death threats, and the enduring enmity of many on Wall Street, especially Citi's executives. But now her name is synonymous in the media with prudent financial advice.



IF YOUR EX-SPOUSE has run off and taken your children abroad, and the international legal system is failing to bring them back, what are you to do? One option is to call Gus Zamora, a former Army ranger who will, for a hefty fee, get your children back. Operating in a moral gray area beyond the reach of any clear-cut legal jurisdiction, Zamora claims to have returned 54 children to left-behind parents.

Here's the story of number 55.

the snatchback

By Nadya Labi

ON A HUMID Thursday afternoon in February, I am riding in a rented van in Central America with a man who abducts children for a living. The van's windows are tinted, and Gustavo Zamora Jr. is speeding east on a two-lane highway toward Siquirres, a town buried in the lush abundance of eastern Costa Rica. Gus is planning to snatch Andres, a 9-year-old American boy who has been claimed by too many parents. Sitting behind me is one of them: Todd Hopson, a 48-year-old lawyer from Ocala, Florida, who considers himself the boy's father, by rights of love and U.S. law. Ahead of me in the front passenger seat is Gus's 22-year-old son and partner, Gustavo Zamora III.

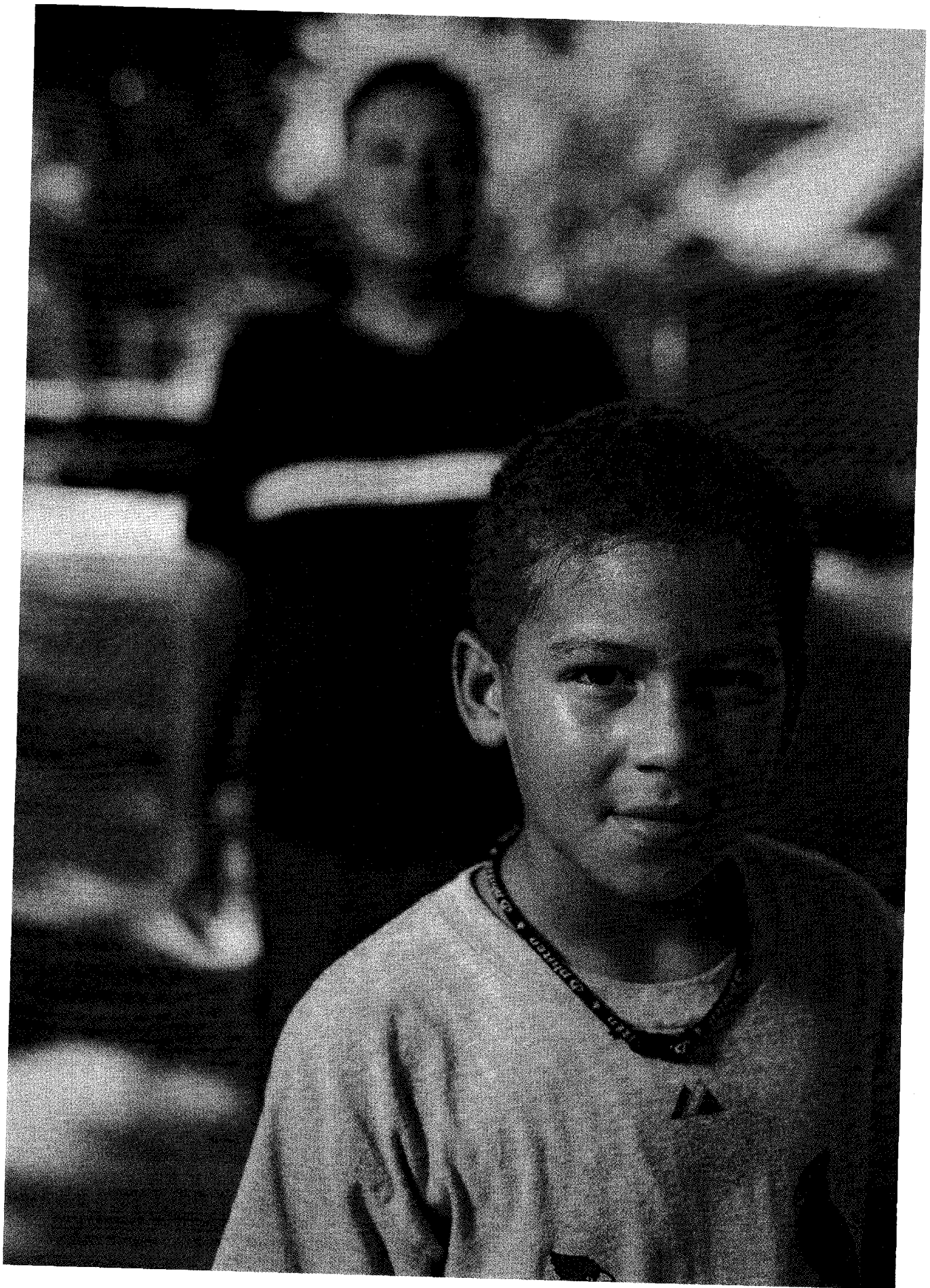
"That's too far for a switch," the elder Zamora, 53, is saying, pointing to a hotel 10 miles outside of Siquirres. His plan is to use two vehicles for what he calls the "recovery," or "snatchback." Once he gets Andres, he intends to drive a white Toyota SUV to a switch point, where he will abandon the SUV and put Andres in the van. That way, any witnesses to the snatchback will report seeing the SUV headed west in the direction of the capital, San José—while in fact Gus and Andres will be in the van headed southeast toward Panama. But this hotel won't work. "We definitely can't come all the way back down this way," Gus says. "I want to make time."

Even by the standards of this American age of divorce, when byzantine custody arrangements are commonplace, Andres's situation is complex. His biological mother, Helen Zapata, who is from Costa Rica but now lives in America, was married to Todd Hopson for just under three years. Now they are divorced—but they continue to share custody of Andres and, until recently, lived together in Florida. Todd never formally adopted Andres, but he and Helen got an official document in Florida in June of 2008 acknowledging Todd's legal paternity. They also asked a Florida court to declare Andres "born of their marriage," a request that was granted the following September and applied retroactively to 2004, the year they divorced.

"I got to thinking—what if something happens to me, and Andres has Helen's last name? Andres wouldn't be entitled to any rights or benefits," Todd told me. "I'm a lawyer and should have been thinking about those things earlier, but I didn't."

At the end of June 2008, Helen flew to Costa Rica to spend time there and, with Todd's support, to enroll in a drug clinic to kick a cocaine habit. Every year, Helen and Andres traveled to Costa Rica to visit not only Helen's relatives, but also those of Jason Alvarado, who is Andres's biological father. So that June, as usual, Andres went along, though he didn't want to go—he didn't want to miss Little League season in Ocala, for one thing. Before Helen left the U.S., she called Jason in Costa

ROBERT ADAMO



Rica, asking if he would look after Andres for a few days and saying that she planned to go job-hunting in Costa Rica so that she could move there permanently. "I lied to him" to hide the drug problem, Helen concedes. When Jason learned Helen's true whereabouts, he called Todd in Florida, thanking him for everything he'd done for Andres and telling him, Todd says, that he planned to raise the boy himself.

Todd felt blindsided. He had thought Andres would be visiting with Helen's mother and told me he had "no idea that Jason had any interest" in having custody of Andres. As Todd saw it, Jason had never previously tried to gain custody or in any way contributed to Andres's care. "If you're going to be the father," Todd says, "you don't let someone else pay the freight."

Todd consulted with the U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica, which advised him to proceed with his plan to pick up Andres in early August. But when Todd flew to Costa Rica, Jason would not let him talk to the boy. Todd was livid. He had hoped to reason with Jason, but he realized that the man had no intention of backing down. So Todd got an injunction from a San José court ordering Jason to surrender Andres, and he and Helen accompanied the Costa Rican police when they went to Jason's office to deliver it. Jason still refused to relinquish Andres, and Todd says the police told him that they didn't have the right under Costa Rican law to enter Jason's home and take the boy. Todd returned to Florida while Helen stayed in Costa Rica. Later in August, Jason challenged Helen's maternal fitness in light of her drug habit and won temporary custody of Andres from a different Costa Rican court.

The Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction was drafted in 1980 to resolve custodial claims between what are known as the "taking parent" and the "left-behind parent." To date, 81 nations, including the United States, in 1988, have agreed to the treaty. The State Department, which enforces the treaty in the U.S., currently has more than 2,000 active cases involving nearly 3,000 children abducted from the U.S. or wrongfully retained abroad. In 2008, it opened 1,082 new files, an increase of more than 25 percent over 2007. (The increase reflects a rise in transnational marriages, and consequently transnational divorces, as well as growing awareness of the Hague Convention.)

Todd considered filing a Hague application with the State Department, but he was skeptical that it would amount to anything because he distrusted what he dismissed as the corrupt legal system in Costa Rica. The application, he feared, could take months to process. He wavered between feelings of fury and utter helplessness. "It breaks my heart," he said to me. "I don't have any control." Determined to regain some, he surfed the Internet for security agencies in Costa Rica, thinking, "I'll hire some bodyguards and just take Andres." A man Todd spoke to at one agency said he didn't do child recoveries but could recommend someone who did: Gus Zamora. "That's all he does," the man said.

Gus, a former U.S. soldier, has dyed brown hair and a tidy moustache. He wears Oakley sunglasses and a gold necklace with a pendant shaped like a diver. A martial-arts tattoo adorns the back of his left hand. In Gus's mind, he's never

stopped being a soldier. In Tampa, his home, he drives a royal-blue BMW with the license plate ABN RGR, referring, respectively, to his time as a member of the 101st Airborne Division and as an Army ranger. When on assignment, like on this scouting mission through eastern Costa Rica, he talks about conducting "recon" and moving his "assets." His dark eyes flit from side to side, taking stock of his surroundings, and he rarely stops talking, dispensing instructions, expletives, and commentary about his travels to 64 countries and counting.

As Gus continues to drive east, evaluating prospective switch points, we pass pineapple fields before turning left off Highway 32 toward Siquirres. In a minute or so, we are at the town square, a stretch of grass dominated by soccer goalposts. Gus points to a bench where he says a bus picks up Andres for school each day.

Musing aloud, Gus runs through potential scenarios. Where's the best spot to grab Andres? At the bus stop, on his way to school? A possibility, but Jason or Jason's father sometimes waits with the boy there. At the school itself? Maybe, depending on how far it is from Highway 32. During one of Helen's supervised visits with Andres at the home of Jason's parents?

Across the street from the square is a yellow house with a black iron gate. Todd identifies it as the home of Andres's paternal grandparents, where Helen has her custodial visits. Gus likes what he sees; Helen could walk through the gate with Andres to the waiting SUV. "They could come and get in," Gus says. "This is a straight shot. The highway's right up here," allowing a quick getaway.

"It's a very short route," Todd agrees.

"I like that a lot better. She can walk out the door," Gus says. "She walks down the street, gets in the van. Boom, gone ..."

HELEN AND JASON grew up in Siquirres. They met as teenagers and started dating seriously when she was 17 and he was 19. Jason moved to San José to attend dental school; Helen finished high school and followed him there. After two years, they began to grow apart. Jason told me he broke up with Helen because she cheated on him. Shortly thereafter, Helen told Jason she was pregnant. According to Helen, Jason wanted her to have an abortion. Jason denies this, adding that he promised to take responsibility for the child if he proved to be the father.

A few weeks later, Helen met Todd Hopson, 18 years her senior. The divorced father of an adult daughter, he was vacationing by himself at a golf resort on the outskirts of San José. Though neither spoke the other's language, he and Helen ended up spending the rest of his vacation together, touring the Costa Rican capital.

When Todd returned to the U.S., he talked to Helen by phone and exchanged letters with her; a friend of Helen's acted as interpreter. Todd invited Helen to Florida. When she told him she was pregnant, he said he had already suspected that, and reiterated his invitation. Bringing along the friend as a translator, Helen flew to Florida and moved in with Todd. (The translator left after a couple of weeks, and Helen now speaks English.)

MORE ONLINE

The author explains how she discovered and reported this story; plus, photos and audio recordings from Andres's snatchback: theatlantic.com/snatchback.

THEATLANTIC.COM



THE SNATCHBACK ARTIST

*Part fixer, part commando,
Gus Zamora has been doing child
recoveries since the late 1980s.*

ROBERT ADAMO

Two months later, Helen's appendix burst, and she was hospitalized in Ocala. The next day, September 6, 1999, she gave birth to a boy. Todd held the infant before Helen did, marveling at his shock of black hair. When Andres left the hospital, a week before his mother did, Todd cared for him. Todd also paid the hospital bills, which came to \$25,000, and financially supported Andres from then on.

Shortly after giving birth, Helen called Jason to tell him he had a son. Jason wanted to make sure that the boy was his, so he asked Helen to send him blood samples, which she did. Jason sent the samples to a laboratory in Costa Rica, and when the test confirmed that he was the father, he wanted to acknowledge his son legally.

When Andres was a year old, Jason flew to Ocala to get a copy of the birth certificate, which named no father. Even though she hadn't intended to cooperate, Helen helped Jason obtain it, and invited him home, where he visited with her, Andres, and Todd. Jason then registered his paternity with the Costa Rican consulate in Miami, but he didn't pursue custody, because, he told me, he was willing to allow Andres to live with his mother. In 2001, Helen married Todd.

Meanwhile, Todd bonded with Andres. As a toddler, Andres would cry and chase the car when Todd went to work. When Andres grew older, Todd helped him with his homework and shuttled him to and from school. When Andres developed a fascination with baseball, Todd nurtured it, taking him to batting cages, hiring a private coach, and cheering him on at games. In 2008, they attended spring training for the Yankees, where Andres was thrilled to be within 15 feet of his favorite player, Alex Rodriguez.

THE BURNING SHIP

No room for regret or self-doubt in art,
doubt but not self-doubt. The ship hauls anchor,
the kerosene lantern flickers and goes out,
voices in the pitch black swell with anger

as shipmates mistake each other for enemies.
The lantern spills, the pilot drops a lit cigar.
Tragedy ensues and engenders more tragedy.
If only the moon could see, if only the stars

had been granted the power of speech.
But the blind remain blind, the voiceless mute.
The burning ship threads its way between reefs
in the darkness. Doubt, but not self-doubt.

—Campbell McGrath

Campbell McGrath's most recent book is Shannon: A Poem of the Lewis and Clark Expedition (2009). He teaches at Florida International University.

Meanwhile, Helen chafed at the quietness of Ocala, escaping to Orlando for days at a time. She liked to throw on tight jeans and high heels and revel in the attention she attracted. Soon, she was seeking out more dangerous highs.

"I've been 100 percent the father and, over the last year, maybe 80 percent the mother," Todd told me.

"Andres trusts Todd more than he trusts me," Helen says.

IN JULY OF 2008, Todd says, Andres called him from Costa Rica in tears. Andres said he wanted to go home and asked, "Daddy, would you come and get me?" Todd counseled him to be patient, promising that he would come to bring him home soon.

Todd Hopson does not come across as the sort of person who would hire a kidnapper. His idea of excitement is watching *Seinfeld* reruns. He is quick with a one-liner if conversation flags. He clears his throat repeatedly, a nervous tic that may be related to his fondness for cigars. During most of our time in Costa Rica, he wore the same outfit—a khaki shirt with lots of pockets, jeans, and bright-white sneakers. But while Hopson may seem like a softie, his resolve is strong: he would rather break the laws of Costa Rica than his word to Andres.

In late August, even before Todd filed a Hague application, he contacted Gus Zamora, who was feeling the pinch of the recession. It had been nine months since his last recovery. "If somebody asked me to find his dog or cat on a roof, I'd do it," he joked. Gus offered to do the job for \$25,000, including expenses—about a third of his usual rate. Still, Todd had to borrow money against his house to pay the fee. Gus planned to take two trips to do the recovery, and Todd agreed to pay him \$10,000 before the first and \$15,000 before the second.

In September, Gus flew from Tampa to Costa Rica to rendezvous with Helen and do reconnaissance in Siquirres. From the start, Helen resisted doing a recovery; she didn't want to break any laws and possibly jeopardize her ability to return to Costa Rica. Todd felt he needed her cooperation, however, because she had access to Andres—and Andres's passport had her last name on it. (A child traveling with adults without the same last name might raise suspicion.) At Todd's insistence, Helen agreed to meet with Gus.

One day, while doing surveillance with Helen, Gus saw an opportunity to grab Andres. But Helen called him off, deciding instead to rely on the local lawyer she'd hired to regain custody. By February, however, Helen was fed up. She had just returned from a visit with Andres, and she was furious that she could not take him anywhere—not even an ice-cream shop—on her own.

"After I go through all the pain and drama of childbirth, they come and take my son away," she told me. "Hell, no. I decided, 'Gus, come here. I'm not waiting for the law, for Jason, for nothing.'"

THE ASSIGNMENT SEEMED straightforward. Helen had access to Andres through her visitation privileges. Todd had assured Gus that Andres wanted to leave Costa Rica. Under these circumstances, how hard could it be to snatch Andres from Jason or from his paternal grandparents, who often

cared for him while Jason, the town dentist, was at work? But Gus had learned from the previous recoveries he had conducted—54 of them, by his count—to proceed with caution.

The price of a mistake, after all, could be imprisonment. Agents like Gus risk arrest for kidnapping or related charges if they're caught. When Gus first started doing child recoveries, in the late '80s, he worked for a man named Don Feeney, who pioneered the practice through his company, Corporate Training Unlimited, in Fayetteville, North Carolina. In 1993, Feeney was arrested on kidnapping charges for trying to recover two American girls from their mother in Iceland. He served one year in an Icelandic jail.

The risks remain high. In 2006, two agents were arrested in Lebanon for taking two girls from their father. The mother, who had hired the agents, spent seven weeks hiding in Lebanon with the girls because she, too, faced kidnapping charges. Gus says he himself has never served jail time—but a warrant for his arrest, for kidnapping, was issued in Mexico in 1997. (The charges were subsequently dropped.) To reduce the likelihood of his being charged with kidnapping, Gus says, he insists that the parent who hires him be present during a recovery.

A successful snatchback is only the beginning of the journey. Sometimes, the child doesn't want to go. Early this year, Gus says, an American father agreed to pay him \$70,000 to recover his 10-year-old daughter from Japan, assuring him that the girl would acquiesce. Gus went to the Philippines to prepare an escape route by boat. He then flew to Tokyo and, accompanied by the father, hustled the girl into a van as she left home. "That little girl screamed bloody murder," Gus told me. "She was beating at the windows. Contrary to everything we'd been told, she definitely did not want to go." After a day of unsuccessfully trying to calm the girl down, he released her. (He says he received half of his fee up front; he wasn't paid the remainder.) Gus says he would never snatch an unwilling child—though he also describes recoveries in which a resistant child grew more willing over time.

Even if a child wants to go, exiting a country can be challenging, because the forsaken parent will usually report the snatchback to the local authorities. In 2000, George Uhl, a neurologist from Maryland, hired Gus to find and recover his 2-year-old son. The boy was traced to western Hungary, where his mother had left him with her parents. After Gus helped Uhl take the boy, French police intercepted Uhl at Charles de Gaulle airport on his way home. Uhl was released that same day, but his son was returned to the boy's mother. Gus blames Uhl for failing to follow instructions. He says he told Uhl to pay cash for a direct flight to the United States; Uhl's mistake was choosing to connect through Paris. At the time, however, there were no direct flights to the U.S. from Venice, where Uhl was dropped off.

In 2007, a woman hired Gus on behalf of her daughter to retrieve her two granddaughters, then 5 and 4, who had

allegedly been abused by their father, the daughter's ex-husband, in Ankara, Turkey. The father had won custody in the Turkish courts and kept the girls' passports, making it hard for Gus to get the girls out of Europe. Traveling with the grandmother and mother, he got the girls to a neighboring country, but the mother could not get papers from the U.S. Embassy for both girls to travel to the States. The mother and the girls have since gone into hiding. (Names and identifying details have been withheld here because the grandmother and mother's lawyers say the girls are at risk of more abuse if they are located.) The grandmother blames Gus. "I gave him \$86,000, and he left us stranded," she told me. But Gus says he had set up an exit route for the family through a third European country, adding that the grandmother stiffed him for \$25,000.

GUS DEMANDS OBEDIENCE from his clients, and tends to view questioning from them as an affront. Some of his gripes are justified; his clients can be unreliable partners. "The client can be your worst enemy," he says. "Every now and then you get a perfect client, but unfortunately in this business, you're dealing with people who are damaged. They're on their own special shelf." Custody battles as intractable as the ones that call for Gus's services rarely involve uncomplicated actors.

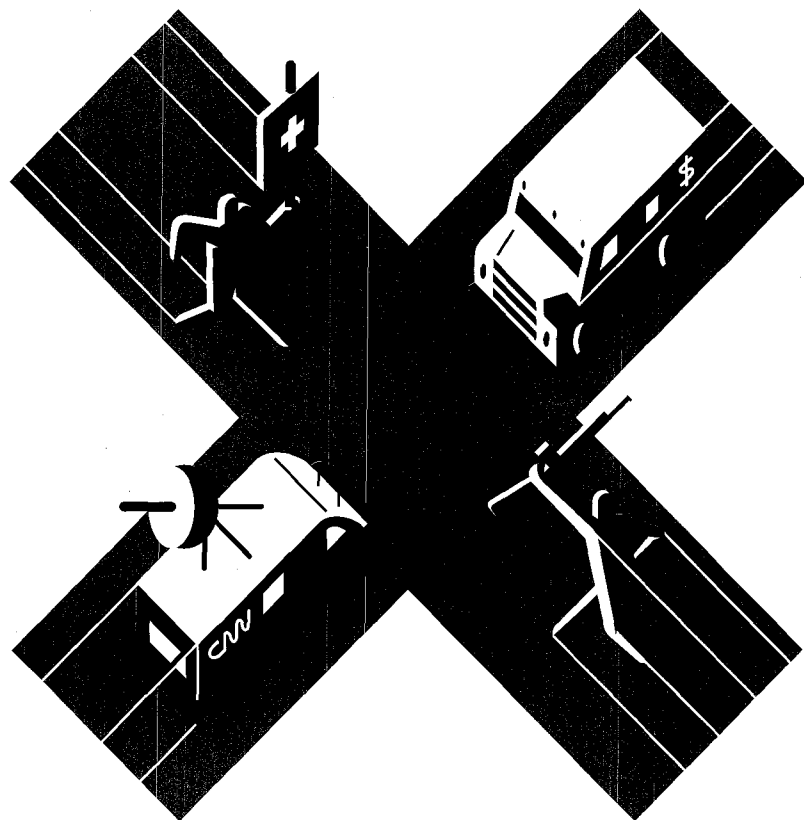
Helen raised Gus's hackles from the start. He didn't trust her, but he felt he had to work with her because it was she, not Todd, who had access to Andres. While she visited with Andres on the front porch, Helen explained, the grandfather usually went to karate class. That left only the grandmother, who spent a lot of time talking on the phone. It seemed to be a situation from which Andres could be easily extricated.

So as dusk falls on a Friday in February, a day after our initial reconnaissance, I am sitting in the SUV, parked around the corner from the yellow house, while Helen visits with Andres on the porch, waiting for an opportunity to take him and make a break for it. Gus has told her not to try anything unless she has a few minutes when she is completely unobserved. But she is having trouble. In the seat behind me, Gus's son is reading aloud text messages from Helen. "She still looking," Helen texts, referring to Andres's grandmother. "She don't move."

A police car passes by. "We've been standing in this spot too long," Gus says. It's a normal patrol, he adds, but if the car returns, he's inclined to leave. Then Helen texts: "We can't do it today." Gus puts the SUV in gear and drives past the yellow house and a royal-blue Toyota Camry—Jason's car—parked in front of it.

The following Monday, I am waiting with Gus and Todd in the parking lot of the motel Gus has chosen as the switch point. Inside, the motel has rooms with mirrored ceilings and rainbow-colored wallpaper; the outside is a garish purple. But Gus has been attracted by subtler selling points: it's only a three-minute drive from the yellow house, and its parking

Gus's services rarely involve uncomplicated actors. "In this business, you're dealing with people who are damaged," he says. "They're on their own special shelf."



lot is set back from Highway 32, concealed by palm trees. The SUV and the van are parked there, side by side.

Gus is sitting on the back ledge of the van, wearing black cargo pants and a silky gray shirt. Todd is standing nearby, running his hands through his hair, which is slick with sweat. Every few minutes, he takes his cell phone out of his shirt pocket and looks down at it, pushing his glasses up on his nose. When the phone rings at last, Todd jumps. Helen has arrived for her visit, and she has put Andres on the line.

"Hey, Papi, how are you doing?" Todd says, using his nickname for Andres. "You ready to come home soon? What'd you do if you see me? You come running to me, huh?"

Rain starts pouring down, so we take refuge in the van. Gus says the weather reminds him of his days as a ranger in the late 1970s, when one of his instructors, a Vietnam vet, ordered the men to strip off their ponchos in torrential rain. "Men," Gus says, recalling the sergeant's instructions, "the best time to catch the enemy with his pants down is when he's under a poncho, in a defensive situation, with a cup of coffee, feeling sorry for himself. That's when you should be moving against his position."

From the porch of the yellow house, Helen texts that the grandfather hasn't gone to karate. As it becomes clear that, once again, Helen is being too closely observed to initiate the snatchback, Todd grows visibly frustrated and wonders aloud whether one solution might be to slow down "the old

man" long enough to keep him from impeding the snatchback. "What if you hire a couple of lowlives ...?"

"It would take me time to fucking do that," Gus says. For all his tough talk, he doesn't seem eager to break down doors.

"Okay, okay," Todd says. "I was just thinking. I don't mean hurt him, but just to, to delay him, to stall him."

Gus doesn't respond. He later tells me that he hasn't been paid enough for that kind of job.

BREAKUPS KNOW NO BORDERS. Lovers from different countries connect, conceive, and in some cases, combust. Their children must weather the aftermath; in the worst cases, they are abducted by a parent and made to live underground. The Hague Permanent Bureau, which collects information about the Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction and advises countries about its implementation, does not keep comprehensive global statistics on this phenomenon. But in 1994, the U.S. State Department's Office of Children's Issues, which handles family abduction cases, had four staff members; today, it has 57.

The convention was designed to mediate cross-border tugs-of-war. Any country that has agreed to the treaty promises to respect the custodial decisions of the

other contracting countries. The convention's goal is to secure the "prompt return" of a child who has been "wrongfully removed to or retained in" another contracting country. The convention specifically defines *prompt*: a judge or administrator in the country where the child is being held is supposed to render a decision within six weeks. The judge is not authorized to make a decision about custody; his job is to determine whether the child should be returned to his "habitual residence" so that the courts in that place can exercise their jurisdiction.

According to the Permanent Bureau's latest statistics, based on surveys of member nations in 2003, in 68 percent of cases, the parent who initially flees abroad with a child is the mother. After a marital separation, mothers are more likely to have primary custody, and many "taking mothers" cite domestic violence as their reason for running off with their kids. Indeed, the most popular defense against a "prompt return" of a child is Article 13B of the convention—that the child would suffer a "grave risk." Another common defense is Article 12, which, after a year has elapsed since the abduction or wrongful retention, allows a judge to take into account whether the child has "settled into its new environment."

"You'll see this when you look at compliance reports," says Martha Pacheco, Abduction Unit chief at the Office of Children's Issues. "The child will not be returned quickly, for whatever reason. A year goes by, two years go by, and then

the argument is made by the taking parent that the child has settled in the country and it will be traumatic for the child to go back. It's not fair—it's a catch-22."

The left-behind parent faces tough odds. Many countries, especially in Asia and the Middle East, have not signed the convention. Those countries have a tendency to favor the rights of their nationals, even if they're the taking parents. Japan has one of the worst records among non-Hague countries. The State Department is handling 73 outstanding cases involving 104 children who have been abducted to or retained in Japan by parents.

The predicament of Walter Benda is typical. In 1995, he was living with his wife of 13 years in her home country of Japan. According to Benda, he wanted to return to the U.S. and she did not. One day, she disappeared with their two daughters. "Please forgive me for leaving you this way," she wrote in a note she left. The Japanese police, Benda says, would not investigate what they viewed as a family matter; it took him three and a half years to find the girls. He never won visitation rights. "It took a couple of years before the courts even interviewed my children," he recalls. "By that time, they'd been brainwashed and didn't want to see their father."

Sometimes even countries that have agreed to the Hague Convention are no better. For instance, the State Department has more than 500 open cases involving 800 children abducted to or retained in Mexico. The convention has no enforcement mechanism; it's up to the judicial system of a member nation to make its court's decision stick. According to the Hague's own statistics from a 2003 study, only 51 percent of all applications end with the child's return to the left-behind parent. When the abducting parent does not consent to give up the child, judges take an average of 143 days to order a return—a far cry from the six weeks mandated by the convention. (Costa Rica, which agreed to the convention in 1998, did not respond to the Hague survey, so it is not included in these statistics.)

In addition to pursuing the matter as a civil issue through the convention, a left-behind parent can press authorities to bring criminal charges against the taking parent. This can result in an Interpol "red notice" calling for police to arrest the taking parent, with a view toward extradition. That's likely what happened last April, when a Russian mother was arrested in Hungary after abducting her daughter in France from her ex-husband, who was badly beaten during the abduction. The mother was extradited to France to face charges of kidnapping and complicity in the assault; she was later freed.

Gus Zamora, for his part, is generally dismissive of what he calls "the Vague Convention." But he's seen it work. In 2004, Hal Berger's then-wife abducted their son from California to South Africa. A year later, he filed a Hague application, spending hundreds of thousands of dollars in legal fees and eight months in South Africa during the litigation; finally, South Africa's Supreme Court ordered the boy's return to the U.S. Berger, his estranged wife, and their son flew back together on the same plane. But 10 months later, she took off with the son again, using fake passports to return to South Africa. Berger went back to the South African courts—but this time he hired Gus, in case the courts ruled against him, or his estranged wife fled a third time. After spending hundreds of

thousands more, a night in jail, and more than a month in Africa, Berger won his case in the South African courts in December 2007 and flew home with his son.

More often than not, Gus gets involved when his clients have lost patience with the courts. When parents come to him in desperation, he asks them three questions: Do they have custodial rights? Do they have an idea where their kids are? And can they afford his fee?

One morning in November of 2005, an engineer (who asked that his name and other identifying details not be used here because of pending legal issues) left his home in the Midwest for work, carrying the lunch his wife had packed for him. A few hours later, he picked up a voice mail from her saying that she had taken their 2-year-old daughter shopping and wouldn't be reachable for a while. Only that evening did he learn that she'd fled to India. The engineer flew to Mumbai, hoping to reconcile. But the marriage seemed irretrievable. On his lawyer's recommendation, he filed for divorce and custody after he returned to the U.S. in January. Ten months later, the engineer called Gus, who advised him to let the custody issue play out in the courts first. Shortly thereafter, the engineer won a default custody judgment in a court in his home state when his ex-wife didn't show up to contest it. At the end of 2006, he flew to Mumbai and met Gus. He returned home with his daughter days later. A kidnapping case is still pending against the engineer in Mumbai.

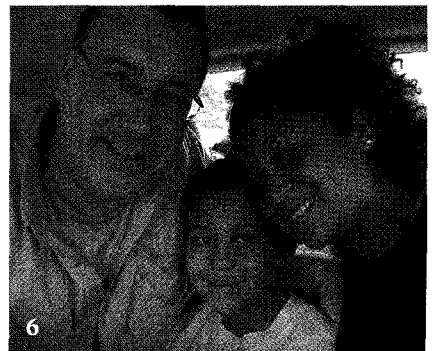
"DON'T DRIVE FAST, especially on the wet roads," Gus counsels Helen, who is standing under the awning of the purple motel, watching the rain pour down. It's 6 a.m. on Tuesday. The parrots are chirping, and the palm trees bend under the weight of the water. "Take your time and get here," Gus adds. "It's only a couple of minutes."

Gus is prepping Helen to snatch Andres at the bus stop. If a stranger like Gus tried to grab the boy, witnesses might intervene, and the police would react immediately. But a mother calling out to her son and inviting him to step into her car might not trigger an alarm. Ordinarily, Gus would ride along in the car with Helen, but he doesn't trust her. He also has doubts about whether Andres will go with his mother. He has more faith in Todd's relationship with the boy, so he has decided that Todd should be in the SUV with Helen. Gus and his son will wait in the getaway van at the purple motel, preparing for a run to the Panama border.

Wearing a striped scarf to cover her distinctive auburn curls, Helen drives into Squirres. Rain lashes the windshield. Schoolkids carrying backpacks walk into the curve of their umbrellas. Hunching low in the middle of the backseat to avoid detection, Todd warns Helen not to drive off the edge of the road, which drops precipitously into a deep gutter.

Helen pulls over alongside a Baptist church. We can see the town square and the bus stop where Andres gets picked up for school, a block away. Cars swoosh by on the slippery road. The windshield wipers swing back and forth. The weather is a problem. The bus stop has no shelter, so whoever drops off Andres is likely to wait with him in the car, to keep the boy dry until the bus arrives.

Todd and Helen are running out of chances. Helen is supposed to have another visitation at the yellow house later



1. Scouting the escape route; 2. Gus and Gustavo, just before the snatch; 3. The switch-point motel; 4. The town of Sixaola, en route to Panama; 5. Embarking on the trip across the border; 6. Todd, Andres, and Helen, after the snatchback

today. Todd, Gus, and Gustavo are scheduled to fly back to the United States tomorrow. A solo practitioner, Todd has cleared his court schedule only until the end of the week. And he can't afford to hire Gus for a third trip.

At 7:00, a white bus stops on the town square. No one boards it. There are no schoolkids at the bus stop. "I don't see any activity," Todd says, sighing.

Time passes. The only sounds are the relentless pounding of the rain, the *swish* of the wipers, and Helen's occasional sniffs.

Suddenly, Helen sits bolt upright. "That's Jason. You see?" A blue Camry heads toward us and turns left onto the street perpendicular to ours. She warns Todd to duck down.

"So where's Andres?" Helen says, perplexed. Why didn't Jason pull over at the bus stop? Why did he turn onto the side street instead? Could Andres's bus stop be located on that side street—not by the square, as she had thought? She asks Todd whether she should check out the side street. He encourages her to go.

"I don't know if we should," she says, even as she turns the ignition, inching forward and looking from side to side. She turns right, following the route the blue car took.

"Oh, here," Helen gasps, looking at two boys in identical uniforms—dark-blue polo shirts and khaki pants—standing along the side of the road. She puts down the passenger-side window, shouting: "Come, Andres! *Ven*, Andres!"

The shorter and slimmer of the two boys, who has close-cropped hair and a light scar on his brow, stares at her. His brown eyes widen, and he steps forward slightly. Then he looks at the other boy, looks back at Helen, and shakes his head.

"He says no," Helen says, putting up the window.

"Did Chino see me?" Todd asks, referring to Andres's companion, who is his uncle. Helen says yes. Todd tells Helen to get out of the car and get Andres.

"He doesn't want me to," she says.

"Go out and get him, Helen," Todd says, his voice rising in frustration. "Just go out and get him." Helen drives on. Todd moves aggressively into the space between the front seats, directing Helen to do a U-turn and return to Andres. She obeys, warning Todd that Andres's bus is coming.

"I don't care, because we're made. Let's go," Todd shouts. "I'm going to get him. Just go!" Helen sniffs, and Todd orders her to stop the SUV. He leaps out and goes to Andres, who is wearing an olive-green backpack.

"Let's go," he says, touching Andres's shoulder. "Come on, buddy!"

Helen adds her encouragement from the driver's seat. "Come, Andres!"

Andres hesitates, glances at Chino, and then walks quickly to the open door of the SUV. Todd throws himself into the SUV behind Andres and slams the door. "Go!" he shouts.

Helen hits the accelerator.

"Hi, buddy," Todd says to Andres, hugging him. "How are you, sweetie?"

"Hi," Andres mutters. He's clearly unnerved.

"Don't worry, Papi," Todd assures him. "It's going to be okay."

In the rearview mirror, Helen can see Chino running toward the yellow house. Todd tells her to focus on the road. "Nice and easy," he says. But Helen careens around the corner, narrowly missing an old man on a bicycle as she swerves to avoid an oncoming bus. As she drives, she keeps asking Andres why he refused to come to her. "He's scared," Todd says.

GUSTAVO ZAMORA III AND NADYA LABI

New.



Quieter than ever before.

Helen turns onto Highway 32, smack into a long line of traffic. Todd kisses Andres. "Who's following us?" Andres asks. Helen keeps glancing behind us, worried that Jason will be there. As the SUV creeps forward in the traffic, she pounds the heel of her right hand on the steering wheel, shouting at the cars. "They need to move!"

"It's okay, it's okay, buddy," Todd keeps saying to Andres, who sits rigidly, staring out of eyes that seem to have lost their ability to blink. "That car just happened to be behind us. I don't think they were following us."

The palm trees in front of the purple motel come into view, and Helen turns sharply to the right before veering left and screeching to a halt. Gus and his son are waiting in the van, eyebrows raised.

Helen, Todd, Andres, and I jump out of the SUV. Gustavo hustles us into the van.

"Let's go," Gus shouts from the driver's seat.

Helen remembers that she's left the keys in the SUV.

"Leave 'em," Gus barks. "Everybody duck down—you especially," looking at Helen. "Your big head has got to duck down. Don't worry about anything. Just stay down until we get a safe distance away."

Gus roars out of the parking lot and turns left onto the highway, heading east. A blue Camry speeds past us in the opposite direction.

AT GUS ZAMORA'S home in Tampa are two huge black safes containing dozens of machine guns, pistols, and rifles—enough artillery, he explains, to outfit a SWAT team of 10 men. (Gus also trains bodyguards.) Inside his office, the shelves are crammed with textbooks like *Shooter's Bible* and *The Gun Parts*. The closet is jammed with model airplanes and shooting trophies. On the walls are pictures and statues of bald eagles; a clock with a camouflage pattern on its face and bullets arrayed around its circumference; certificates attesting to esoteric skills, including one from the "Methods of Entry School" for a course in "surreptitious entry techniques"; newspaper clippings with photos of beaming families; and a handwritten letter from a third-grader in Texas. "Dear Gus," the girl writes, "I remember you, and I hope I can see you sometime."

Born in Gary, Indiana, in 1955, Gus joined the Army in 1977, and served in the 1st Ranger Battalion, an elite infantry unit; a rapid-deployment force based in Vicenza, Italy; and the 101st Airborne Division. He met his wife, Vicki, in the service and left the Army in 1984 to prepare, he says, for the birth of their first child. He received an honorable discharge and started working for a series of private security companies. After a stint with a company based in Brownsville, Texas, Gus landed in northern Costa Rica, working on a report about the Contras in Nicaragua for the U.S. Council for World Freedom. Gus stayed in the area, providing protection for John Hull, an American rancher who helped the CIA deliver aid and weapons to the Contras. (A Senate subcommittee later collected evidence that Hull

had been engaged in drug trafficking; he was also indicted for murder in Costa Rica. "What's a little murder when you're overthrowing a government?," Gus says. "That's part of the process.") Gus then made his way to Don Feeney's company, Corporate Training Unlimited, in the late '80s. Feeney's first recovery case, involving the rescue of a 7-year-old girl who'd been taken to Jordan by her father in 1988, had touched off an international incident; the State Department ended up expressing regret to Jordan. Gus, who speaks Spanish fluently, covered Latin American operations for Feeney.

After spending time in that Icelandic jail in 1993, Feeney cooled on the child-recovery business. But Gus was hooked. "I remember calling Gus and saying, 'I've got a case. There's almost no money in it, but I believe the child is in real danger,'" Feeney recalled when I spoke to him recently. "Thirty minutes later, he was at the front door of the office, saying, 'When do we leave?'"

Gus thrives on the feeling that he's doing good while having fun. He embraces the travel with the gusto of a tourist, collecting information about a well-placed bar, a cozy Italian restaurant, the best hotel Jacuzzi. When he has to plan an escape route over water, he'll often go scuba diving for a few days while he makes contacts. Despite his specialized military skills, his real expertise seems to be the ability to network—and to talk his way out of a predicament. He's more fixer than commando.

Gus is paid to take on risk. But his critics say that he also exposes others to danger. When I asked Feeney whether anyone was harmed during his or Gus's recoveries, he responded, "No. I'm not going to tell you that nobody ever got smacked around a bit. But by the time we were gone on the plane, they got up and dusted themselves off." The people guarding the child are not the only ones in jeopardy. If an operation goes wrong, a reclaiming parent risks not only jeopardizing any legal case, but also arrest or physical injury. Even worse, a child may be harmed. (Critics of Gus's line of work often cite this risk, but I haven't heard of a case where a child was actually physically hurt.)

Even if a recovery proceeds safely, a child may be traumatized. "One of the most psychologically devastating aspects of family abduction is the sudden, unexpected rupture," Liss Haviv, the executive director of Take Root, an organization composed of formerly abducted children, explained to me recently. "Being recovered may produce the same result. Whether your situation ultimately improves or not, you learn once again that any- and everything can change in the blink of an eye. How do you trust after that?"

Gus insists that no one has been physically harmed during his recoveries. But military-style operations may result in casualties; that's what may have happened in 2000, when Gus and George Uhl picked up Uhl's 2-year-old son in western Hungary. Uhl's ex-wife, Katharina Gotzler, had left the child there with her parents. Gus and Uhl went to the grandparents' home to retrieve the boy. What came next is contested.

When parents come to Gus in desperation, he asks them: Do they have custodial rights? Do they know where their kids are? And can they afford his fee?



ASPEN IDEAS FESTIVAL



THE 2009 ASPEN IDEAS FESTIVAL

This summer marked the fifth anniversary of the Aspen Ideas Festival. Since its establishment in 2004, the Festival has become one of the premier annual gatherings for thought leaders from the worlds of government, business, media, science, arts, and culture. This year, twelve program tracks addressed “Ideas That Work” in topic areas ranging from *World Affairs and the Global Economy* to *Managing Planet Earth*, from *Innovations in Education* to *Living Digitally*.

The Festival featured a roster of more than 240 prominent speakers, including Eric Schmidt on the economy, Susan Rice on the domestic and foreign philosophy of the Obama administration, Arne Duncan on the future of American education, James Steinberg on the Obama administration and the Middle East, and James Fallows and Niall Ferguson on China. More than 4,000 people attended the daily plenary sessions, concurrent tutorials, breakfast and lunchtime sessions, casual conversations, and book signings, as well as lively evening exchanges and in-town events.



Altria



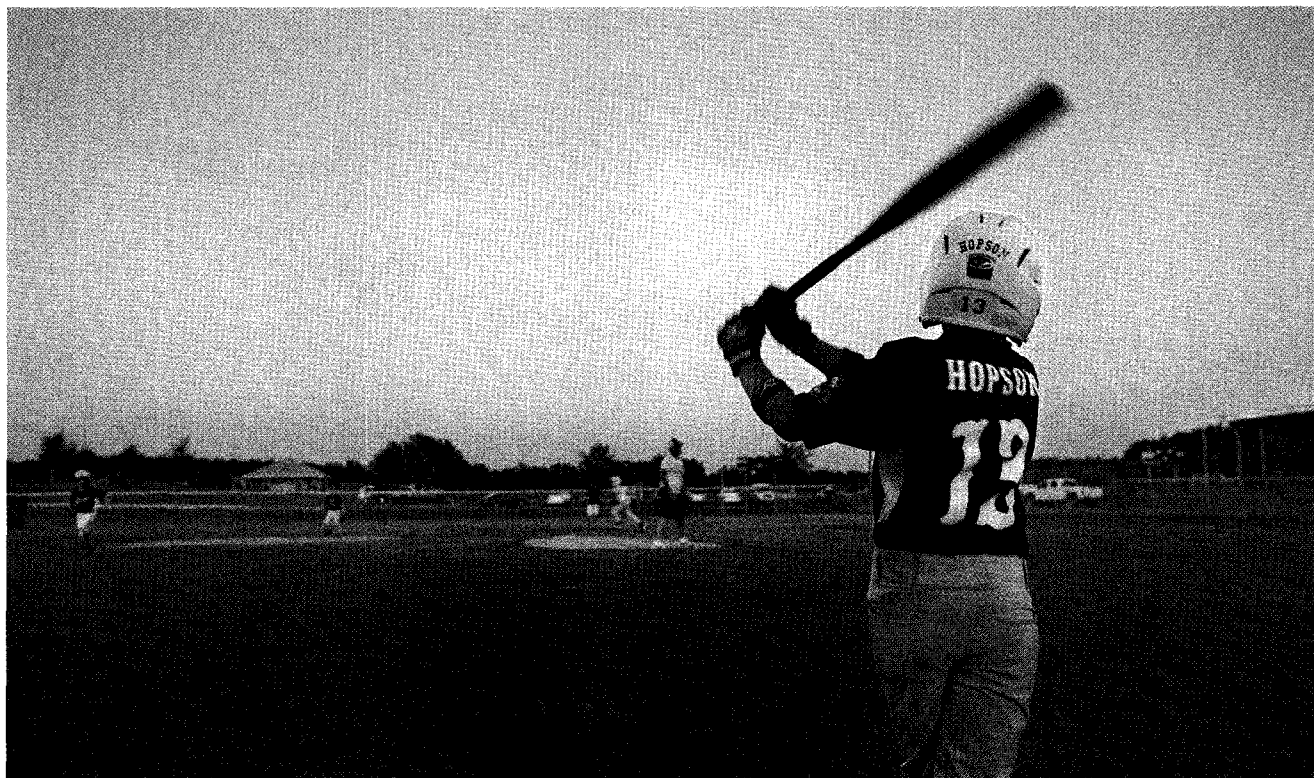
Booz | Allen | Hamilton



Mercedes-Benz



THOMSON REUTERS



Andres back home in Florida, at baseball practice in early September. "One of the most psychologically devastating aspects of family abduction is the sudden, unexpected rupture," says one expert. But Andres's teacher has observed no ill effects.

Gus says he waited in the getaway car while Uhl, an American associate, and two Hungarian "assets" went inside to snatch the boy. (When I spoke recently to Gus's assistant on the job, she did not corroborate that Gus was in the car during the recovery, saying she could not recall the specific events.)

Gotzler was in Munich at the time. When she didn't hear from her father that night, she called the neighbors and asked them to check on him, according to her attorney, Donald Cramer. The neighbors found the boy gone, and the grandfather dead.

A German court found that Uhl "had the son abducted with the assistance of armed kidnappers. In the course of this abduction, the grandfather came to his death." Cramer added, "Zamora's belongings were checked at the hotel—he had Tasers, weapons of all sorts, and ropes."

According to Gus, one of the Hungarian men had told him the grandfather smoked a cigarette during the recovery, worrying that he'd be blamed for not protecting the boy. "We had somebody check the phone records from that apartment," Gus says. "The grandfather called his daughter in Germany. She called him back several times, and when she arrived, he was already on the couch dead. We believe that she literally tore him apart on the phone and stressed him out so much that he had a heart attack and died." Gus says the autopsy reported that the cause of death was natural and that the estimated time of death was four hours after the abduction. Prosecutors in Hungary did not press charges.

Uhl has not seen his son since he was stopped at the Paris airport on his way home. (He declined to be interviewed for this article.)

THE DAY AFTER the snatchback in Siquirres, *Diario Extra*, a popular tabloid in Costa Rica, reports that while Andres was waiting for the bus, a white Toyota SUV stopped, and two women and a man "violently grabbed" him. The newspaper lists Helen, an aunt, and a U.S. national named "Hotson" as suspects. The article includes a photo of Andres and instructs anyone who spots him to call the police. Jason's wife is quoted: "We are confident, given that only a few hours have gone by, that they would not be able to take him out of the country."

But while the police search for Andres in a white Toyota SUV, we are speeding toward Panama in a beige Dodge Caravan. Andres and Helen lie against each other in the backseat, and Todd is prone against the side door. Gus is at the wheel.

"Andres looks good," Todd says. "That was some shock and awe."

After nearly an hour, Gus has fought his way through traffic to the turnoff to Limón. Except for some overhanging palm trees and piles of trash, the road is clear. At Gus's say-so, we sit up. Helen pulls off Andres's dark-blue shirt so he can exchange it for a white T-shirt that says CORNERSTONE MIDDLE SCHOOL.

"You want to go home, right?" Todd says.

Andres nods.

"You remember, I promised," Todd says. "Did you think Daddy wasn't going to come for you?"

Andres shakes his head.

Todd tells Andres that he's left his room exactly the same and that a package has arrived all the way from Japan for him—a customized baseball glove.

ROBERT ADAMO

"Your hair looks great, buddy," Todd says, kissing him and observing that he's grown a little Mohawk. Gus's son informs Todd that the correct term is *faux-hawk*.

Andres takes care with his appearance; he is a handsome boy who looks like a miniature version of his favorite Yankee, A-Rod. He tells Todd that he's started using a hair gel called Gorilla Snot. Later, he asks if he'll be able to buy the gel in Florida. Throughout the journey, Andres says little, but he seems most concerned about having "forgotten" things—like the hair gel, his clothing, his iPod charger, his Nintendo DS, and, most important, two of his baseball gloves. He had taken them with him to Costa Rica, even though he didn't play much baseball in Siquirres.

As "What's Love Got to Do With It?" plays on the radio in the background and the ocean crests by the side of the road, Todd tells Andres, "I was so angry when I came down and they wouldn't let me have you."

Andres says nothing. But he smiles a few minutes later when Todd cracks a joke about the snatchback, saying: "I was going to tell you, 'Come with me if you want to live.'"

Gus drives past dilapidated shacks with corrugated-iron roofs, huddles of thin brown cows, and fields of banana plants, their bunches of fruit cradled in bright-blue plastic bags. After an hour, we arrive at Sixaola, a town that shares a narrow river with Panama and lies in the shadow of a border crossing. Trucks idle on a graffiti-covered concrete overpass that runs through the town. Gus's plan is to get Todd and his family to Panama without passing through an official border stop. Presenting them to immigration officials in Costa Rica at this point is too risky.

Gus frets about finding his contact, a Nicaraguan who owns a motorboat in Sixaola. Luckily, "the Nica," as Gus calls him, is at his home—a rickety contraption consisting of sheets of iron on a wooden base. The Nicaraguan goes off to fetch the boat. While we wait, Gus reverses the van, rocking it back and forth on the edge of an embankment, which is littered with rotting banana peels and tin cans. Finally, he manages to squeeze the van next to a pigpen in the backyard of the man's home.

Andres gets out of the van. He plays with a purple band on his wrist and fingers his faux-hawk until a blue boat pulls up to the embankment. He steps into the rocking boat. The engine sputters to life. Minutes later, the captain hops onto Panamanian soil and ties the boat to a banana plant. Todd, Andres, and Helen walk across a stretch of swamp and step into a black pickup with tinted windows that Gus has arranged to have waiting for them.

IT'S TIME FOR the Little League play-offs between the Red Sox and the Bulls at the Ocala Rotary Sportsplex. Andres—HOPSON displayed on the back of his dark-blue shirt—stands on the first-base line next to his teammates, listening to "The Star-Spangled Banner" with his hat over his heart. The music stops, and Andres's coach shouts, "All right, gentlemen, let's

go out there and throw some balls!" Soon, Andres is up at bat. He goes down in the count, two strikes against him. He stares through his mirrored sunglasses at the pitcher, a scrawny boy with a mean right arm, and swings at the next ball. The bat connects and he races to first, sliding in safe.

It's as if Andres never left Ocala. He wakes up every day at 7:10 a.m., takes a shower, and has a bowl of Lucky Charms. Then Todd drives him to the Cornerstone School, a private school with banners along its halls promoting MUTUAL RESPECT AND APPRECIATION—NO PUT DOWNS. Miss Candice, his third-grade teacher, says she has observed no ill effects from his absence. He does his assignments on time, and he is the Four Square star of the playground. Todd's relationship with Helen broke down, however, not long after their return, and he asked her to move out.

Todd considered taking Andres to a psychologist, but he decided against it because the boy seemed fine. In response to my direct questions, Andres says that the Alvarados treated him well but that he doesn't miss anything about Costa Rica. He didn't play baseball in Siquirres. It's "funner" in Ocala, where he plays baseball three times a week. He says he knew his dad would come for him. Andres doesn't like to talk about Costa Rica. If anyone asks where he was, he told Todd upon his return, "I'm going to say it's a long story."

But as Jason Alvarado sees it, the story is simple. Helen Zapata and Todd Hopson kidnapped Andres. Andres, he says, had been adjusting well to Siquirres; he had even been president of his class. Jason says he doesn't want to appear ungrateful to Hopson for raising Andres. Still, he believes Andres's care should be a matter between him and the boy's mother. "Now that his mother seems not to be able to take

care of him, I don't see why he has to stay" in the U.S., Jason says. "They have always known I'm the father. I have always been there for him emotionally and economically." Todd, for his part, says that Jason never spent "one centavo" on Andres's care; Jason counters that he sent money to Helen.

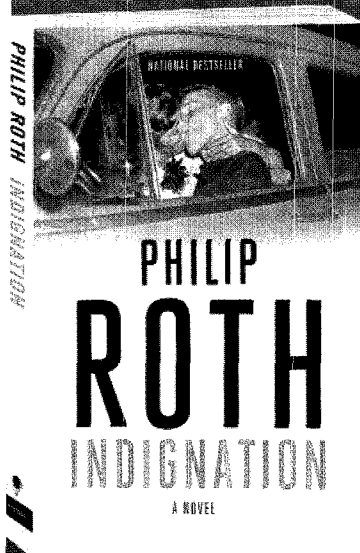
In theory, the U.S. State Department agrees with Jason's view. "We cannot condone the violation of the law of another sovereign territory," a State Department spokesperson says of private recovery attempts. Yet when Todd informed the State Department that he had, with Gus Zamora's help, recovered Andres, the woman helping with his Hague application responded by e-mail, "We all breathed a

collective sigh of relief on hearing that Andres and Helen are back home in Florida with you." She went on to explain that Costa Rica had "a steep learning curve" about the convention, and said of Hopson's application, "We frankly do not know how it might have worked in your case."

Jason is giving them another chance to find out: in late May, he filed his own Hague application, requesting his son's prompt return. ■

Nadya Labi is a writer in New York City.

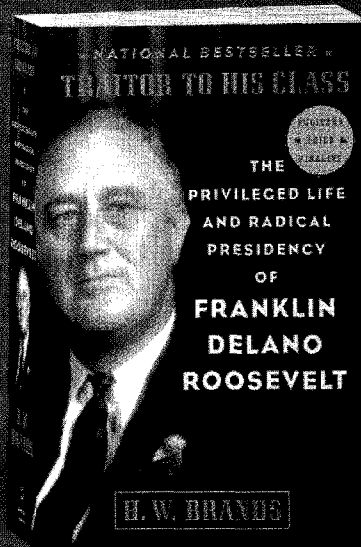
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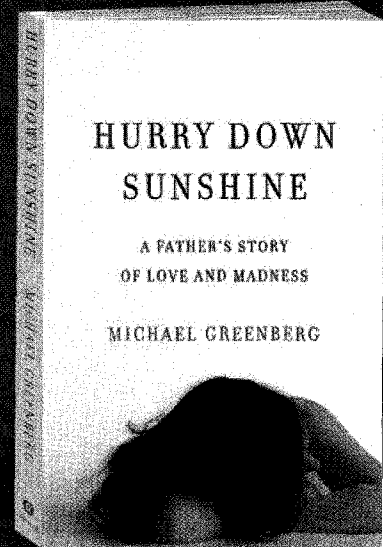
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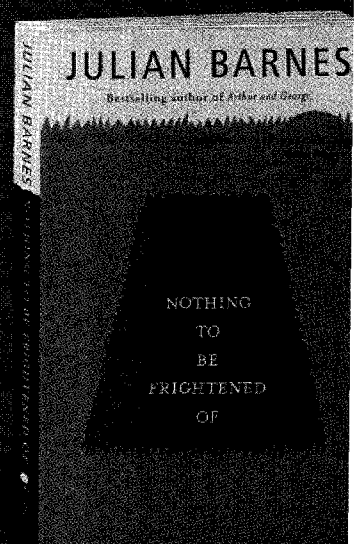
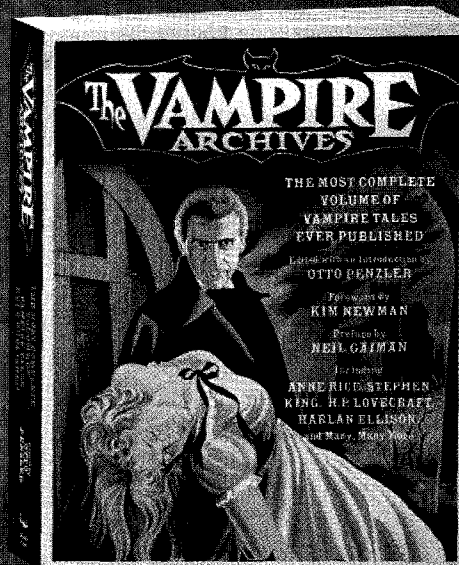
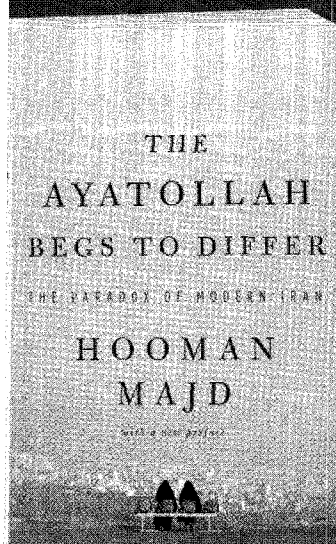
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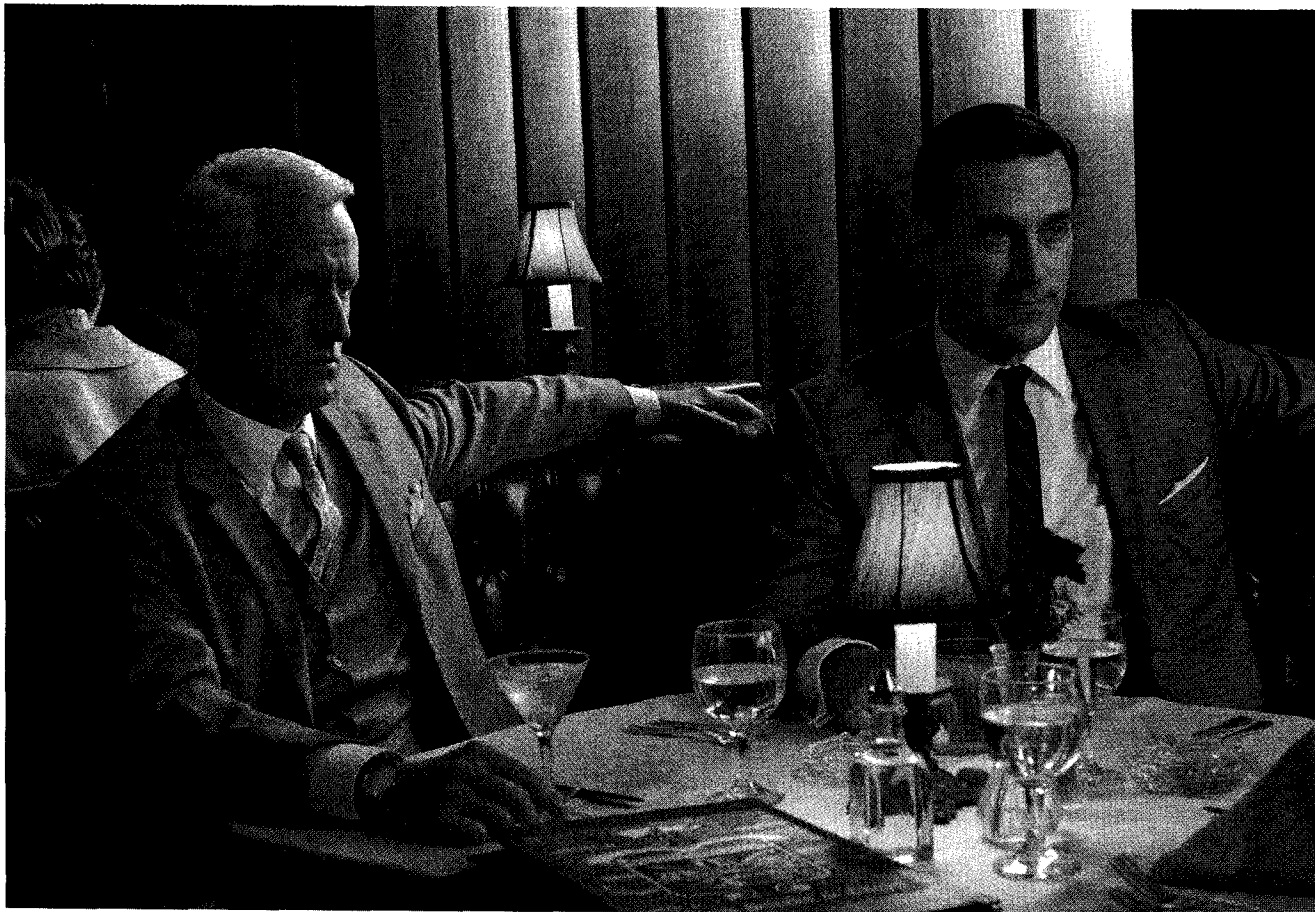


BOOKS

EDITOR'S CHOICE *Benjamin Schwarz takes a look at Mad Men's appeal.*

REVIEW *Christopher Hitchens on the political calculus behind war's carnage*

COVER TO COVER *Alice Munro's way with women; the obstetric dialectic; and more*



EDITOR'S CHOICE

The Devil's in the Details

WHAT'S WRONG—AND WHAT'S GLORIOUSLY RIGHT—WITH *MAD MEN*

By Benjamin Schwarz

FOR MORE THAN 10 years, the intricate, multiseason narrative TV drama has exercised a dominant cultural sway over well-educated, well-off adults. Just as urbanish professionals in the 1950s could be counted on to collectively coo and argue over the

latest Salinger short story, so that set in the 2000s has been most intellectually, emotionally, and aesthetically engaged not by fiction, the theater, or the cinema but by *The Sopranos*, *Six Feet Under*, *The Wire*, *Deadwood*, *The Shield*, *Big Love*.

After watching videos of *The Sopranos*' 13-hour first season, the film critic Vincent Canby discerned that

this new genre—owing to its “cohesive dramatic arc,” the quality of its production values and ensemble performances, and the sophistication of its writing—amounted to a “megamovie” rather than merely a tarted-up TV miniseries. And he bestowed on it a fairly exalted pedigree, tracing it not just to Dennis Potter's English production *The Singing*

CARIN BAER/AMC

Detective (1986) and Fassbinder's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1980) but even to Erich von Stroheim's lost silent masterpiece, the nine-and-a-half-hour *Greed* (1924).

Such claims were a tad much—as are, in a similar vein, *The New York Times*' Virginia Heffernan's avowals that *The Sopranos*' premiere was “like the publication of *Ulysses*” and that the series “may have required more patience and effort from the lead characters than drama ever had, from Euripides to Artaud to Stoppard.” Still, the megamovies have warranted, and received, careful analysis—at least 20 books have taken on *The Sopranos*, and now we have *Kings of Madison Avenue*, by Jesse McLean, a companion volume to the megamovie of the moment, *Mad Men*, a series set in a New York advertising agency in the early 1960s. The book, at a well-padded 231 pages (complete with the inevitable cocktail recipes), is pretty slight, but its detailed, often observant exegeses of the first 26 episodes—and the release of the DVDs of the same, which include audio commentaries of every show and supplemental documentaries on the stylistic achievements and historical context of the series—prompt readers and viewers to undertake the considered appraisal that this deeply textured, painstakingly crafted drama deserves.

Some elements of *Mad Men*'s appeal have been nicely explained by Charlie Rose (who can always be counted on to embrace the conventional wisdom) in that inimitably sycophantic, answering-his-own-question-that-isn't-even-a-question way of his: “Why has this so resonated, especially with critics and people who like smart writing and tightly drawn characters?” he pronounced in an interview with the show's creator, Matthew Weiner, and two of its male stars, Jon Hamm and John Slattery. The writing—and the direction, photography, and (with one important exception) acting—is superlative, the show is dramatically

compelling. Moreover, as Rose's customarily reverential invocation of the critics suggests, not just Rose but also *Mad Men*'s affluent, with-it target audience are particularly susceptible to liking what *The New York Times*' Arts and Style sections tell them to like (30-plus articles in two years!). Add to this

KINGS OF MADISON AVENUE

By Jesse McLean
ECW

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the meticulous, lush styling and art direction, which make the series eye candy for its (again) target audience, already in thrall to the so-called mid-century-modern aesthetic—an appeal that's now further fueled by the slimline suit/pencil skirt marketing tie-in with Banana Republic, that canny purveyor of upper-mass-market urbanity. Then there is the miraculous Hamm, playing the lead character, Don Draper. Here is an actor who at once projects sexual mastery and ironic intelligence, poise and vulnerability. That alchemy has created

the greatest male stars, from Gable to Grant to Bogart to McQueen to Clooney, because it wins for them both the desire of women and the fondness of men. So the show's white-hotness was all but predetermined.

Finally, there's another factor, one that cuts both ways and thereby contributes to *Mad Men*'s inner tension: the peculiar emotional chord the show's setting strikes with viewers over 30. Critics invariably discuss how the series echoes John Cheever's stories, Billy Wilder's *The Apartment*, and Richard Yates's *Revolutionary Road* (a novel Weiner says he hadn't read when he created the show). But for every audience member familiar with

MORE ONLINE

Ben Schwarz
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gin-soaked Shady Hill, there are dozens whose notions of the glamour of adult life, of Manhattan, and of “creative” careers were shaped by endless reruns of three sitcoms with concrete ties to *Mad Men*'s particular milieu: *The Dick Van Dyke Show*, *Bewitched*, and *That Girl*. The key to television success, Don Draper tosses off, is to offer “derivative with a twist.” *Mad Men* is those shows grown up, grown hard, and—in ways that

flatter its writers' and viewers' images of themselves—grown wise.

CANBY WROTE THAT a defining characteristic of the megamovie—a genre whose leisurely pace allows for an almost novelistic vividness and accretion of detail—was its commitment to observing its “time and place ... with satiric exactitude.” Outwardly, Weiner, who was an executive producer and writer on *The Sopranos*, seems to have taken that comment to heart. Keen observers, he and his staff understand that suits were sackier in 1960 than in 1963; that a department-store heiress in 1960 would wear a dress that had been featured in, say, *Vogue* in that year, and that she could have her hair done daily, while a secretary's wardrobe in 1960 might include a new sweater from Klein's but also a dress that had been in style in 1958, and her hairdo would degrade as the workweek ground on; that a suburban kitchen was far more likely to be decorated ersatz colonial than space-age; that clothes have to fit the performers as they did in 1960 or 1962; that actresses must be trussed up in period-accurate foundation garments, because otherwise the characters' bearing will be anachronistic—and they understand that bearing reflects and informs temperament and behavior. At its best, this fetishistic attention to period accuracy succeeds in summoning an alien world in which characters move, fidget, and even kiss differently. Weiner, though, seeks a goal beyond that. He wants to achieve something like the satiric exactitude Canby spoke of: “The story is told in the detail, and those details have their own life,” he told *The Times*.

By this standard, though, Weiner's exercise is unavoidably sterile. The pattern of a necktie, the club frequented, the restaurant patronized, the shopping bag carried, the prep school attended, together with a thousand other details, signify minute social distinctions, and reveal and even define character. But crucially, the telling details from a lost world can't tell today (even if the club, restaurant, store, and school still exist, they can't connote now what they did then), which perforce means that *Mad Men* is something of a costume drama.

This striving for verisimilitude serves another purpose: Weiner seems to hope that getting the vintage mitten clasps and IBM Selectrics right will help viewers believe that outrageously un-PC attitudes and behavior were as common as the series shows them to be. *Mad Men* is hailed for what *The Times* calls its “unflinching portrayal of Eisenhower/Kennedy-era sexism, racism, anti-Semitism,” and this unrelenting focus on the unenlightened aspects of the past is clearly central for Weiner and his writers. Most of the supplemental historical material in the DVD sets focuses on racial and gender issues and progressive politics, including a lengthy paean to the SDS’s gaseous Port Huron Statement. The takeaway is clear, as *The Times* approvingly quotes an academic who indulges in a rather Whiggish interpretation of history: “The show explains why the ‘60s had to happen.”

But even if the portrayal were as “dead-on” as *The Times* assures us it is, that portrayal is hardly neutral. In describing a scene in which sexist badinage is exchanged at an account meeting, McLean correctly points out that “the series is critical of this limited view and is not afraid to spell [its criticism] out.” That stance—which amounts to a defiant indictment of sexism and racism, sins about which a rough moral consensus would now seem to have formed—militates against viewers’ inhabiting the alien world the show has so carefully constructed, because it’s constantly pressing them to condemn that world.

And that stance is responsible for the rare (and therefore especially grating) heavy-handed and patronizing touches in an otherwise nuanced drama. *Must* the only regular black characters be a noble and cool elevator operator, a noble and understanding housekeeper, and a perceptive and politicized supermarket clerk? *Must* said elevator operator, who goes unnoticed by the less sensitive characters, sagely say when discussing Marilyn Monroe’s death, “Some people

just hide in plain sight”? Get it—he’s talking about *himself*. He’s *invisible*. Even worse, that stance evokes and encourages the condescension of posterity; just as insecure college students feel they must join the knowing hisses of the callow campus audience when a character in an old movie makes an un-PC comment, so *Mad Men* directs its audience to indulge in a most unlvely—because wholly unearned—smugness. As artistically mistaken as this stance

is, it nonetheless helps account for the show’s success. We all like to congratulate ourselves, and as a group, *Mad Men*’s audience is probably particularly prone to the temptation.

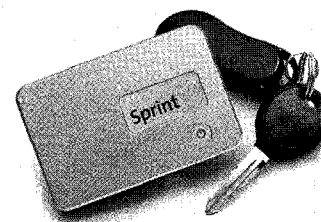
Any period drama will have its share of slips, and most of *Mad Men*’s are inconsequential. (“The military-industrial complex,” coined by Eisenhower

in his 1961 farewell address, finds itself on the lips of account manager Ken Cosgrove in 1960; if the pompous dilettante copywriter Paul Kinsey was a Freedom Rider—itsself an implausible plot element, intended to signal that the times, they are a-changin’—he would have been going south to desegregate interstate transportation, not register black voters, as the show has it.) But other slips demonstrate an unsure grasp of the show’s setting and characters—and of the class differences that complicate the rather blunt stance the series takes. A supplement to the first season’s DVDs makes explicit what attentive viewers already understood: *Mad Men* deliberately shocks its audience by presenting as reasonable and commonplace behavior we now find appalling. This gambit, a signature feature of the show, can force the audience to viscerally experience the foreignness of the past, and when so used it can be a brilliant dramatic ploy—but only if the action portrayed is as de rigueur as the show suggests. At a child’s birthday party, for instance, a man hits a boy who has spilled a drink, and no one reacts, not even the boy’s father. The Draper family, in another case, drives away from the scene of a family picnic, nonchalantly leaving their

This fetishistic attention to period accuracy summons an alien world in which characters move, fidget, and even kiss differently.

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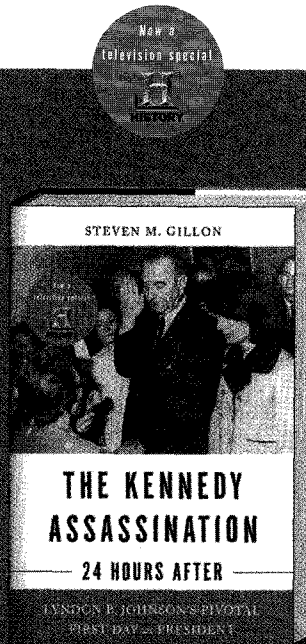
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trash on the ground where they were sitting. Yes, corporal punishment was more common then than now, and Iron Eyes Cody wouldn't be tearing up on TV screens for another nine years. But Dr. Spock's permissive parenting notions exercised a near-hegemonic sway over child-rearing practices in the bedroom communities of the Northeast's professional class, and however one chose to correct one's own children and whatever the state of America's roadsides, the actions portrayed were simply not the done thing. *Nice* people—the educated and affluent—didn't hit other people's kids, and they didn't, especially in front of their children, walk away from a pile of trash they had created.

Mad Men's most egregious stumble—though seemingly a small one—involves Betty Draper's college career, and it is generally emblematic of this extraordinarily accomplished show's greatest weaknesses, and specifically emblematic of its confused approach to this poorly defined character.

Betty, the show establishes, was in a sorority. So far, okay. Pretty, with a little-girl voice and a childlike, almost lobotomized affect; humorless; bland but at times creepily calculating (as when she seeks solace by manipulating her vulnerable friend into an affair); obsessed with appearances and therefore lacking in inner resources; a consistently cold and frequently vindictive mother; a daddy's girl—Betty is written, and clumsily performed by model-turned-actress January Jones, as a clichéd shallow sorority sister. (Just as Don's self-invented identity is *Gatsby*-like, so Betty, his wife, is a jejune ornament like Daisy, though without the voice full of money.) But she's also a character deeply wronged by her serial-philanderer husband, and she's hazily presented as a stultified victim of soulless postwar suburban ennui (now there's a cliché). So, perhaps to bestow gravitas on her, or at least some upper-classiness, the show establishes that she went to Bryn Mawr. But of course Bryn Mawr has never had sororities. By far the brainiest of the

Seven Sisters—cussed, straight-backed, high-minded, and feminist (its students, so the wags said, preferred the Ph.D. to the Mrs.)—Bryn Mawr was probably the least likely college that Betty Draper, given to such non-U genteelisms as “passed away,” would have attended. So much for satiric exactitude. In the pilot and through the early stages of the series's development, Weiner had planned to show little of the Drapers' home life, which might explain Betty's woefully undeveloped character. The strength of the megamovie is that it can build complex characters over time—but the telling details it accumulates to serve that process work only if the writers are clear and consistent about what they are trying to say.

TO WATCH THIS megamovie as it should be watched, as a 26-hour (and counting) cycle, and to read McLean's dissection of its intricacies, is to grasp *Mad Men's* triumph: its emotional intelligence—evident not only in its writing and acting but in its exquisite direction, lighting, and photography—overwhelms its mushy ideology and whatever Important Points it wants to make.

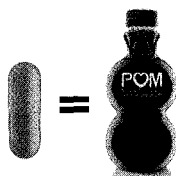
***Mad Men's* triumph is that its emotional intelligence overwhelms its mushy ideology and whatever Important Points it wants to make.**

Don—who is quickly established as a sophisticated adult, wry, not lacking in sensitivity, genuinely curious about the inner lives of women (after all, fathoming their aspirations and desires is the key to his professional success), sexually adventurous but intolerant of the lewd frat-boy behavior of the junior executives—sternly rebuffs a pitiful pass from the new girl, Peggy, an innocent from Brooklyn, whose observations of the office culture have led her to believe that she must offer herself to him. Peggy is obviously relieved, as are the viewers, whose faith in their hero has been rewarded. But just as the audience is luxuriating in his admirableness, Don tries to buck up Peggy, still quaking from the scolding he gave her, by telling her

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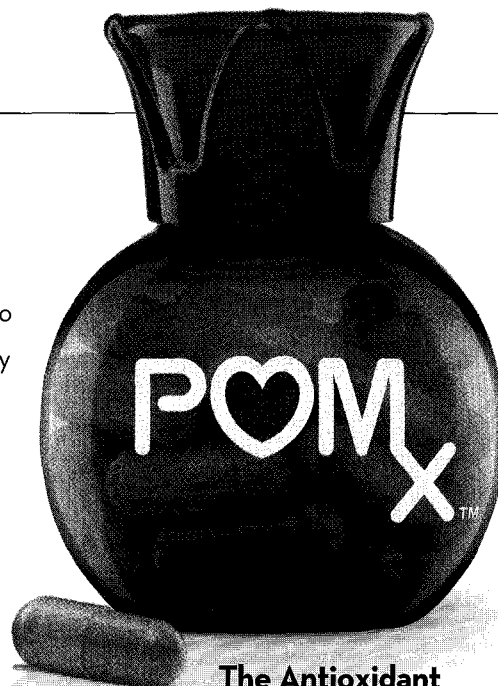
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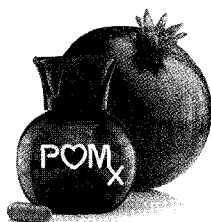
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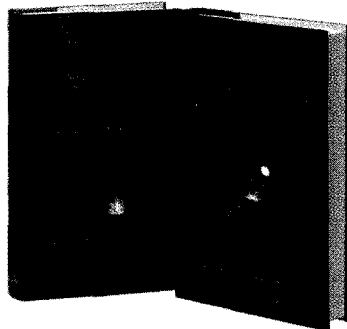
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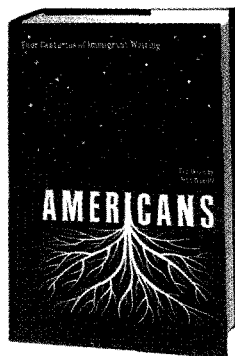
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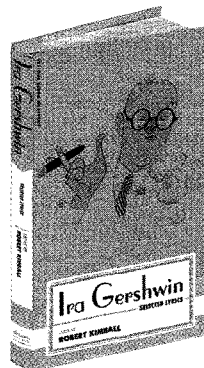
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to "go home, put your curlers in ..." It's the kind of casually sexist remark that makes today's viewers squirm. And it's precisely what Don would say to Peggy—because she's a woman, but not just because she's a woman: she's also a secretary, dowdy, and from an outer borough.

Don Draper is also consistently true to the past the writers have established for him. Some critics find his appealing unflappability implausible, and they fault the show for sacrificing its commitment to verisimilitude in the interest of maintaining the lead actor's appeal. They fail to grasp that Don—whose entire identity is a fabrication—would have to possess preternatural cool. He's always on. In the single most affecting scene of the entire series, Don pitches an advertising campaign to Kodak. He's projecting slides of his children and his wife as he talks—tears welling, his voice slightly quivering—about the ache of memory. It's a deeply poignant scene, made even more so by the modulation of Don's emotions. And it's a bravura performance by Hamm—of Don's bravura performance (watch Don's persona shift as he slips into the pitch). Viewers feel, and want to feel, that Don's emotion is genuine—but they also know that Don is selling himself, and that it could all be an act. The series's most chilling sequence follows Betty in the Draper house as she spends morning to night methodically searching suit pockets and papers and rifling through desk drawers to discover evidence of Don's infidelity. Viewers are conditioned to know she'll find it—what else would be the point of the sequence? And some are no doubt uncomfortable when they realize that, thanks to the way the directing and writing have built up the suspense, they're rooting for the bad guy, as it were. As evening comes—the sequence nicely captures that yucky feeling at the close of a day spent shut up in the house—Betty has found ... nothing. After a momentary surprise, the viewer realizes that *of course* Betty would find nothing, because—and it's the same reason Don's winning poise is entirely believable—like all great liars, Don never lets down his guard.

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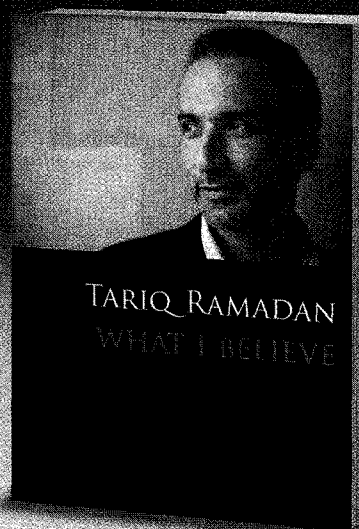
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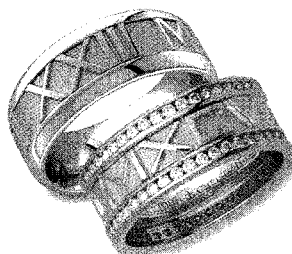
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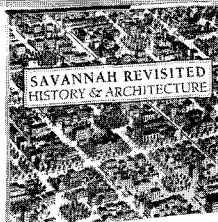
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entertainment, so it's fitting that *Mad Men*, which is the most quintessentially American megamovie made to date, explores a peculiarly American theme and exploits a peculiarly American asset. Leave it to a show that famously employs an unusually high number of women writers to capture—more vividly than anything I've encountered save Norman Mailer's short story "The Language of Men" and, obliquely, John O'Hara's "Graven Image"—the unrelenting, low-level competition and consequent posing, the miscues and jarringness, the monotonous lack of intimacy that characterize a good deal of the conversation among middle-class American males. And leave it to television to enshrine correct Americanese.

Weiner's policy of not allowing British actors to play American characters stems from his eminently reasonable logic that his show "is so American, it should be played by Americans." And, unusual for a megamovie, its characters aren't (as they say) "ethnic," and they're not cops, criminals, or the downtrodden. Rather, they're predominantly well-educated, articulate WASPs. So verisimilitude doesn't demand that the characters shave t's and drop g's. Unlike so many fancy American TV dramas, *Mad Men* doesn't require the viewer to pause and replay the DVD to make out what's being said. Rather, the actors deliver their often fizzy but (because it's guarded or reflective) never fast-talking dialogue with the clear, relaxed enunciation of casually elegant American speech. Unlike performers in most naturalistic American productions—theatrical, cinematic, or on television—who can only gesture at meaning with the fragmented language with which they're supplied, the *Mad Men* actors are given precise words and whole, often clever and grammatically complex sentences to work with.

The cognoscenti, though, have largely ignored this quiet virtue while extolling what are really the show's considerable flaws. Ah, the media juggernaut. If *Mad Men* were half as good as the hype would have it, the show would be one of the best ever produced for American television. It's both. ■

Benjamin Schwarz is The Atlantic's literary editor and national editor.

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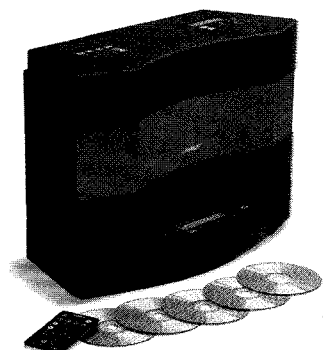
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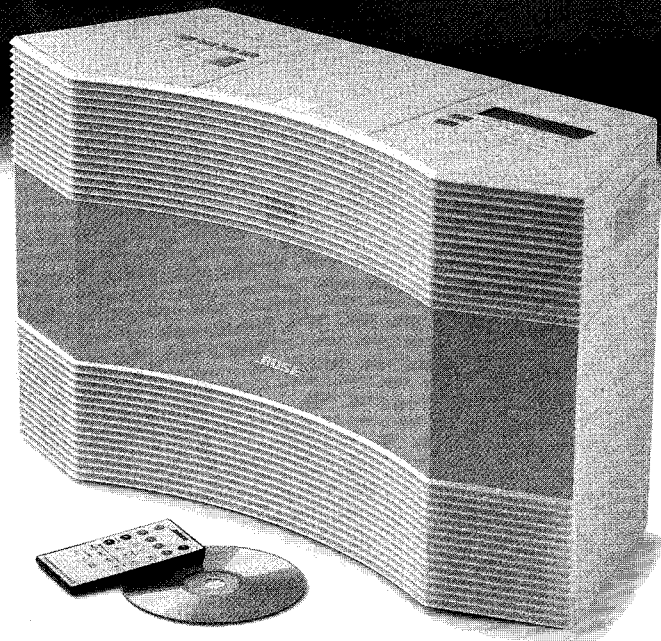
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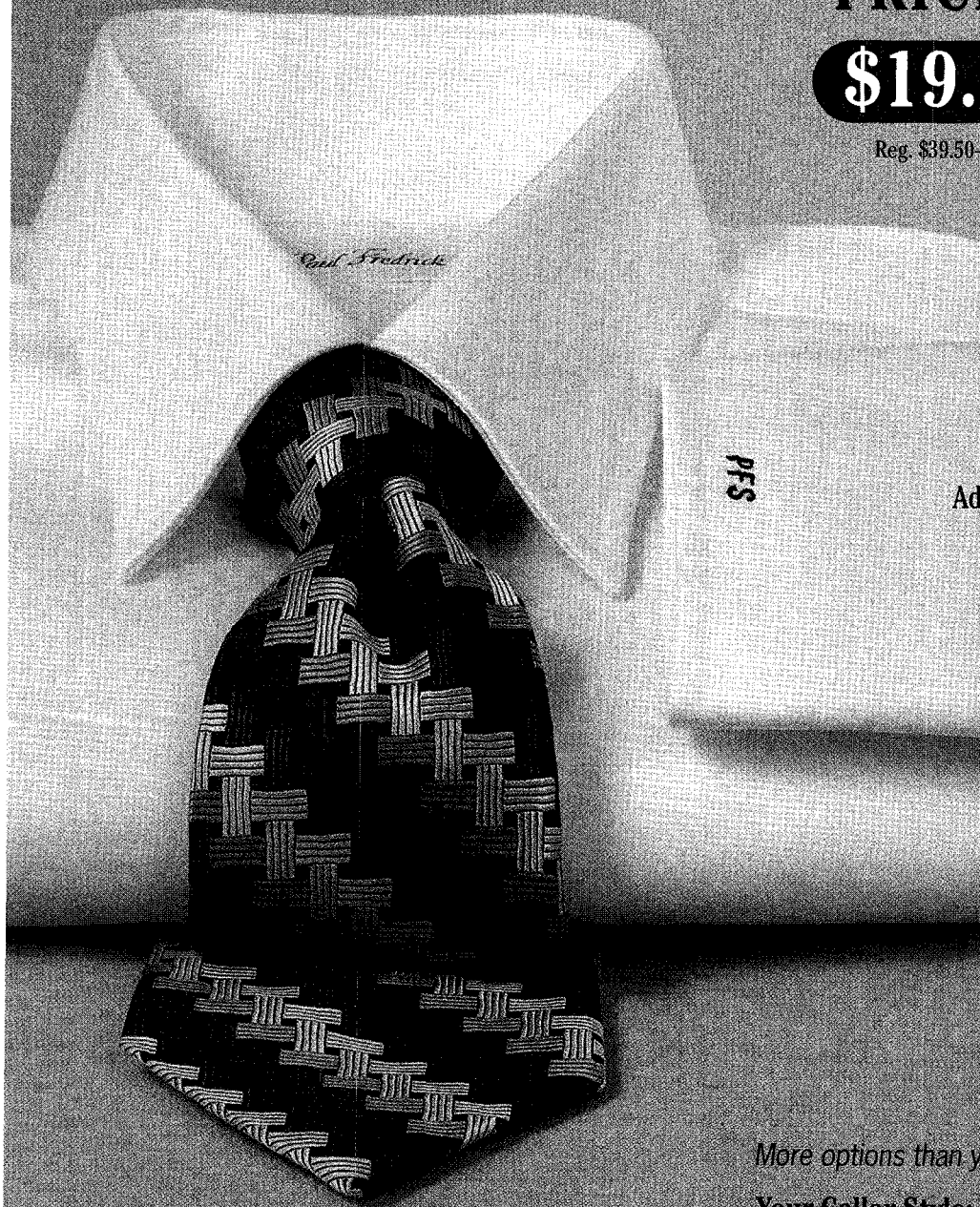
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The Pity of War

IS LEADING ONE'S OWN TROOPS TO SLAUGHTER EVER JUSTIFIED?

By Christopher Hitchens

MANY YEARS AGO, I went to the Central Lobby of the Houses of Parliament in London to keep an appointment with the almost picturesquely reactionary Conservative politician Alan Clark. He was the son of Kenneth (later Lord) Clark—the art historian and author of the *Civilisation* series—and the heir to Saltwood Castle, in Kent. He was also the author of a 1961 book, *The Donkeys*, which was a history of the British General Staff in the First World War. The title came from a famous comment that had supposedly been made at that epoch by a German military strategist. Told by the highly impressed Quartermaster General Ludendorff that “these British soldiers fight like lions,” General Max Hoffmann had responded: “Yes, but lions led by donkeys.”

MARC YANKUS

Probably no historical image would be harder to dislodge from the collective memory than that of the teak-headed, red-faced, white-moustached general, his tactics derived from long-ago cavalry maneuvers, sitting in a château headquarters well behind the lines as he orders waves of infantry across minefields and through barbed wire, forcing them like the Light Brigade itself “into the jaws of death, into the mouth of hell,” and into the waiting German machine guns. Clark’s history of this cataclysmic episode was in some ways the least of it: the war poetry of Wilfred Owen and Isaac Rosenberg and Siegfried Sassoon, together with the memoirs of Robert Graves, now constitute a sort of separate department of English literature, centered around not just “the pity of

war,” but also its futility. However, *The Donkeys* attained a relevance well beyond its shelf life because it was adapted by Joan Littlewood and mutated into

the mighty stage and then screen triumph of *Oh! What a Lovely War*. This work made the teak-headed, red-faced, white-moustached version into something practically unchallengeable for the first

generation that had no memory of the conflict itself.

As I marched across Parliament Square, semiconsciously falling into step with the military pace of the right-wing half of this right-left collaboration, Clark said to me: “I suppose you have heard people say that I am a bit of a fascist?” We had a whole lunch ahead of us and I didn’t want to get off on the wrong foot, but something told

**THE SOMME:
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By Peter Hart

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me he would despise me if I pretended otherwise, so I agreed that this was indeed a thumbnail summary in common use. "That's all balls," he replied with complete equanimity. "I'm really much more of a Nazi."

This was what Bertie Wooster would have called "a bit of a facer"; I was groping for an apt response when Clark pressed on. "Your fascist is a little middle-class creep who worries about his dividends and rents. The true National Socialist feels that the ruling class has a debt and a tie to the working class. We sent the British workers off to die en masse in the trenches along the Somme, and then we rewarded them with a slump and mass unemployment, and then that led to *another* war that gutted them again." For Clark, the lesson of this bloodletting was that a truly national, racial, and patriotic class collaboration was the main thing.

Peter Hart is one of the chief historians at what the British still call the Imperial War Museum, in London, and he is a member of that tremendously tenacious group of scholars—the late (somehow magically named) John Terraine being the veteran of the group—who cannot rest until honor and credit have been restored to those who made up the British Expeditionary Force in France and Flanders. Hart writes like this: "The remorseless rhythms of global war had already wrapped themselves around the British Empire" (a sentence that would work just as well, if not indeed better, if it were the British Empire wrapping itself around the global rhythms), and he alludes scornfully to those who moan on about "the pity of it all," although that phrasing doesn't occur in Wilfred Owen, who wrote firsthand of "war, and the pity of war," and said, "The poetry is in the pity." Hart has no big-picture sense of the place of the Great War in the narrative of the 20th century—he is as committed to the mud of Flanders and Picardy as his forebears were. Nonetheless, as one turns his pages, one is compelled to be

impressed by the way he builds his relentless and one-dimensional case. The battles along the Somme were not one repetitive fiasco after another, but rather represented a very steep and painful learning curve, up which the British army agonizingly inched, to eventually acquire the skills and sinews that wore down Prussian militarism.

This doesn't alter the fact, which Hart scarcely bothers to conceal, that there was something doomed about the first assault. A purely political calculation was involved. The French army had been so terribly mauled and

demoralized at Verdun that the British feared it might actually disintegrate unless they shored up its flanks. According to General Sir Douglas Haig himself, quoting General Joffre at what had obviously been a panic meeting:

He [Joffre] therefore was of the opinion that 1 July was the latest date for the combined offensive ... The moment I mentioned 15 August Joffre at once got very excited and shouted that "The French Army would cease to exist, if we did nothing till then"! The rest of us looked on at this outburst of excitement, and then I pointed out that, in spite of the 15th August being the most favorable date for the British Army to take action, yet, in view of what he had said regarding the unfortunate condition of the French Army, I was prepared to commence operations on the 1st July or thereabouts.

The first day of July 1916 it finally was, and I dare say people still remember that on just that first day of the attack, the British suffered about 57,000 casualties, more than one-third of them fatal. (A pair of lovely old villages in the Cotswold Hills in Gloucestershire is quaintly named Upper Slaughter and Lower Slaughter. Upper Slaughter is well known locally because it is one of the tiny number of villages in the country that did *not* lose any men in the Great War.) Hart has no time for details such as the foregoing, but almost 200

Does the carnage on the Somme represent one more needless item on the butcher's bill, or a necessary step on a steep and painful learning curve?

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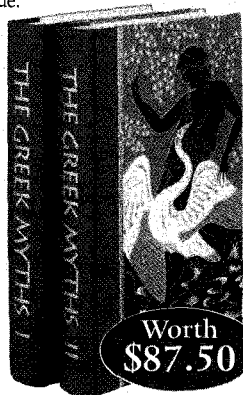
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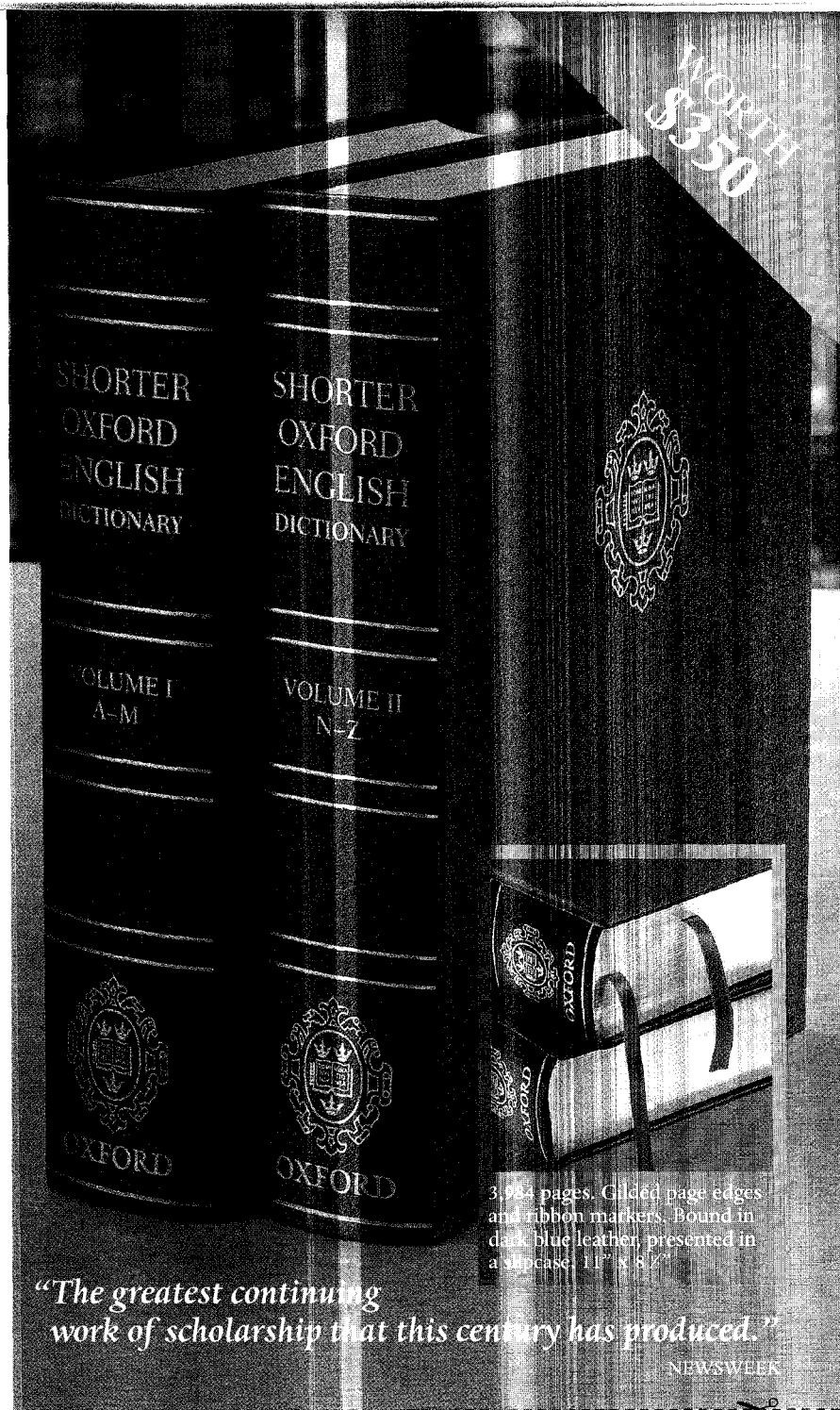
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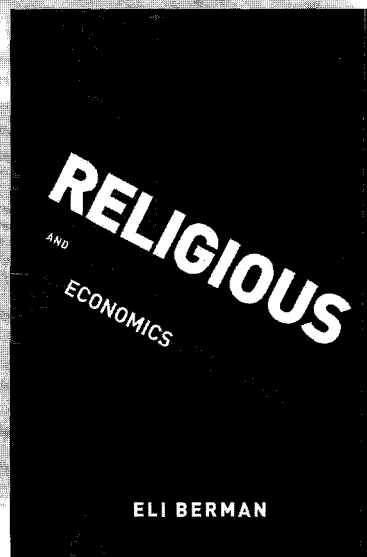
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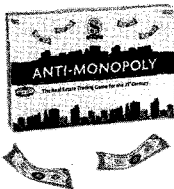
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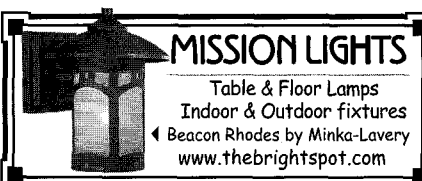
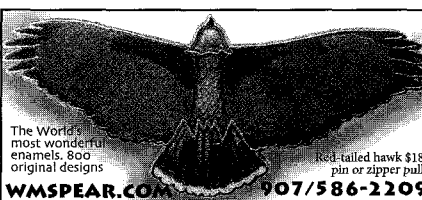
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pages after that ominous Haig-Joffre citation, he makes the same point about the continued bloodletting in his own brisk and businesslike way:

Even if Haig had fully realized the depth and breadth of the losses suffered by his assaulting divisions on 1 July he could not have aborted the offensive without seriously jeopardizing the *Entente Cordiale* with France and Russia ... They were unlikely to look on with any great sympathy if Britain tried to evade her share of the "butcher's bill."

So the Hart line can be followed and understood once one accepts that British mass casualties were a political question: a price worth paying for the continued good opinion of the Russian czar and of the future leadership of Vichy. But then it does happen to be true that soldiers are the subordinates of politicians and that war is the continuation and extension of politics by other means, just as it happens to be true that a field headquarters more or less has to be in the rear of the action, because no general can command from a shifting front line.

From Hart's book I was able to learn and grasp (and even picture) the historic importance of the "creeping," or perhaps better say "staggered," barrage. The descriptions one has so often seen, of entire ranks and files of British infantry lying dead almost symmetrically, like so much freshly scythed wheat, are all true. But these men were being expended while the British artillery struggled to evolve a system of covering bombardment that "walked" in front of them, smashing trench after trench and clearing them a path. Pains-takingly leading us through a series of terrible engagements, Hart succeeds in showing how the gunners got steadily better (as did the guns). He also succeeds in giving one an enhanced respect for the German soldiers who held positions under this unbelievable rain of fire and were still—almost always—ready to fight. Sometimes they were too stunned and deafened and dazed to do anything but surrender, or rather, try to do so. An unpleasantly recurrent theme in the diaries and letters of British soldiers—Niall Ferguson has also been able to be honest about this often-



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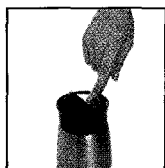
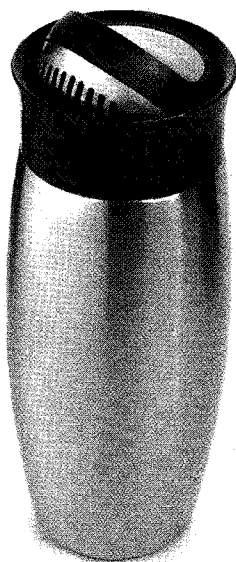
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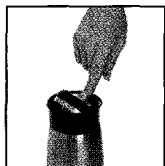
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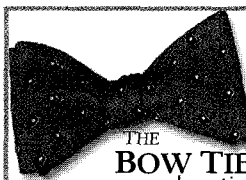
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avoided question—is the casual or even gloating way in which the Tommys boasted of killing German prisoners. In many instances they were more or less under orders to do so, from men such as Lieutenant Colonel Frank Maxwell of the Middlesex Regiment:

And I must say that they fought most stubbornly and bravely. Probably not more than 300–500 put their hands up ... I have no shame in saying so—as every German should in my opinion be exterminated—I don't know that we took *one*. I have not seen a man or officer yet who did anyway.

It used to be said of the American Civil War that it was the last of the old wars and the first of the new, but on the Western Front in the early days of the war there were still some traces of a more gallant and less mechanized age. Here is the admittedly rather ridiculous Chaplain Leonard Jeeves of the 18th Division, describing one episode of over-the-top quixotry on that first awful day:

A few hundred yards away from where we were fast becoming busy, my good and brave friend, Captain Nevill, led his men into the fight with footballs. And thus he died. With the Englishman's way of fighting, he went on his way. The War was a game which was to be played to the end in a clean and straight manner.

This is perhaps too much like a stiff-upper-lip caricature to have much effect on the reader's emotions, but if you have tears to shed, you will prepare to do so when you read of the "Pals" battalions that were formed out of men from single localities and neighborhoods. This often gave a great impetus to recruitment, with entire streets of men joining up together. But the devastating effect of mass casualties on such communities was correspondingly intense. (John Harris's neglected masterpiece of a novel, *Covenant With Death*, is the success that it is because it follows a group of Sheffield workers from their flag-waving sign-up to the hecatomb on the Somme.)

Hart doesn't mention it, but the massacre of the Ulster Protestants of Belfast, which also took place on July 1, was a major contributing cause to the sectarian warfare that has only just

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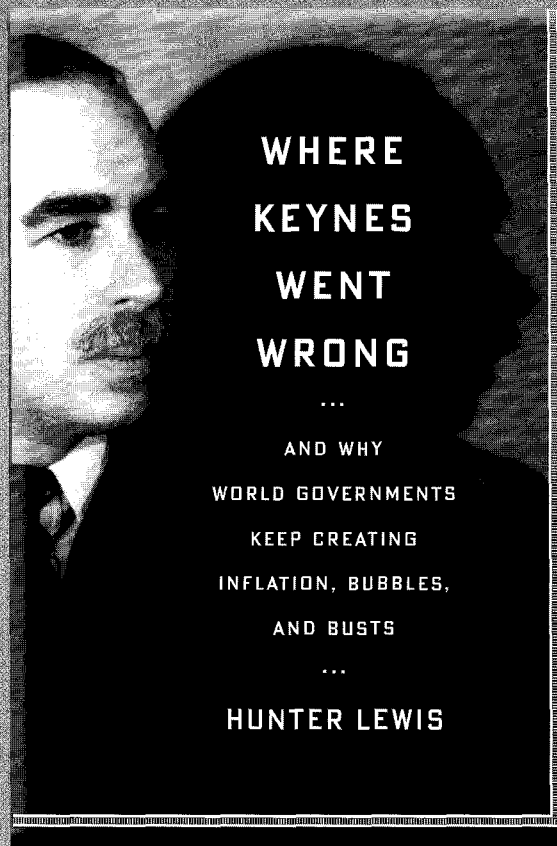
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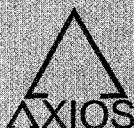


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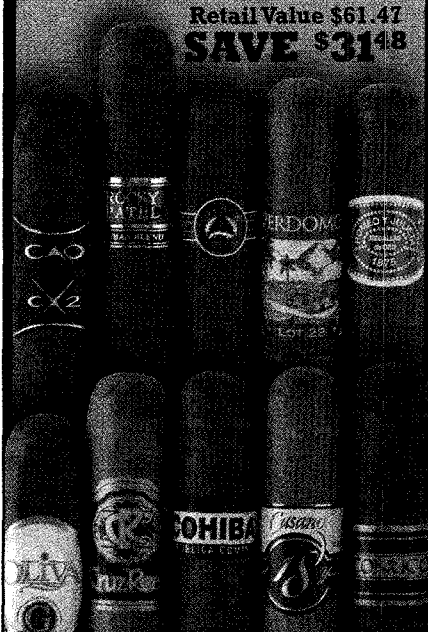
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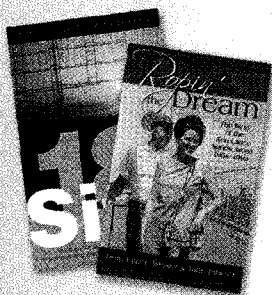
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ended in that city. The influence of the Vimy Ridge fighting on the formation of Canadian nationalism, of Gallipoli and the Somme on the emergence of an Australian identity, together with the role played by Indian regiments in fueling demands for self-government, would themselves make a book on empire. Most people have never heard of Delville Wood, but if you mention it in South Africa you will find that it is still a place of fame: only 780 out of the 3,153 men in the South African Regiment were present to answer the roll call by the time the wood itself had been obliterated and they had been withdrawn from it. This horror came, regrettably enough for them, in the early days of the learning curve, and many of these casualties were the result of British shells bursting in their midst.

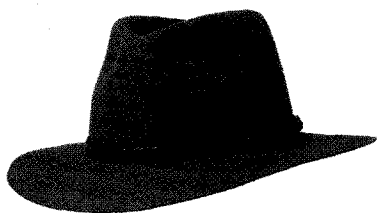
The attitude and personality of General Sir Douglas Haig—personification of the bovine British militarist—is one of those subjective factors that no amount of historical revisionism can erase. Reacting to an extremely painful and costly reverse suffered by an Australian division whose soldiers had been flung into an ill-advised attack through no fault of its own, Haig snootily informed the Aussies that they were not fighting Turks anymore, and wrote in his diary:

Some of their divisional generals are so ignorant and (like so many Colonials) so conceited, that they cannot be trusted to work out unaided the plans of attack.

He could also, when it suited him, invert the Clausewitzian cliché and intervene directly in British politics. By the end of July 1916, Winston Churchill had become so concerned about the appalling butcher's bill and the lack of compensating terrain gained from the Germans that he wrote a confidential memo for the eyes of the War Cabinet. Haig sent a reply, in which he spoke of the Somme as a demonstration to the world of "the fighting power of the British race" and stressed the importance of the campaign in relieving pressure on the Russians (who were little more than a year away from total capitulation). He also told King George V that Churchill's "head is gone from taking drugs." Hart describes that latter statement as "delightfully waspish."

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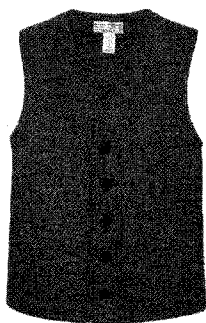


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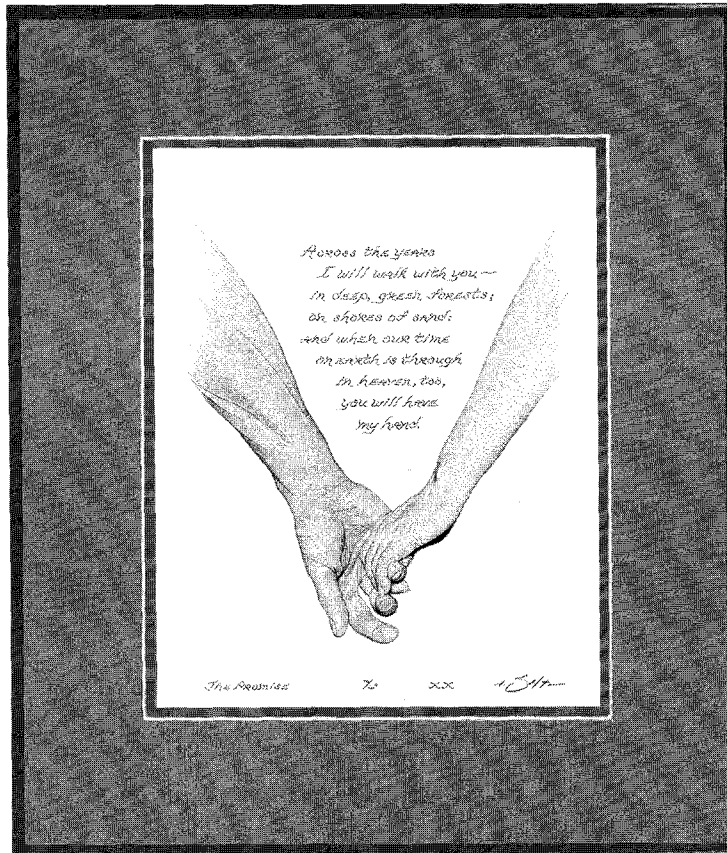
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Every now and then there is a real "find" among the journals kept and books written by soldiers: I was especially engrossed by the pungency of one Lieutenant Lawrence Gameson, a medical officer with the Royal Field Artillery. His unbearably vivid description of health conditions among his men makes it easier to understand why the casualty figures went so high and stayed so high: this was a very dirty war, where even a slight wound or infection was in many cases a death sentence. Gameson used understatement to great effect and also knew when it was being employed for euphemism: informed by his superiors that "the wet season [was] approaching," when many of his trenches were already "waist deep in liquid mud," he described their choice of the word *wet* as "scarcely short of criminal meiosis."

But language is not the dimension in which Hart excels. To some of us, mention of "the river Somme" is the opening of Act III, Scene v of *Henry V*, a coincidence that he never mentions. "We would not seek a battle as we are," King Henry soon tells the French herald Montjoy, adding imperishably, "nor as we are, we say, we will not shun it." That could sum up the attitude of many a stoic British lion as he shouldered the burden the Donkeys had laid upon him: this play is the one above all others that gives voices to the soldiery. (Alas, as Shakespeare didn't flinch from showing in Act IV, Scenes vi–vii, before that day at Agincourt was done, the British had massacred all their French prisoners, too.) Henry's rhetoric places a constant emphasis on the way that the struggle dissolved the barrier between king and subject, creating a "band of brothers." That was fanciful enough, to be sure, but the carnage of 1914–18, which led to the greatest fall of monarchies in history, also widened and deepened the class chasms and led to the spewing-up of Nazism from the wreckage of defeated Germany. "The darkest hour"—Hart's subtitle—is naively supposed to be the one just before dawn. The mortal combat in Flanders fields, by contrast, was the prelude to a continental darkness far more Stygian than anything that could even have been imagined before it. ■

Christopher Hitchens is an Atlantic contributing editor and a Vanity Fair columnist.

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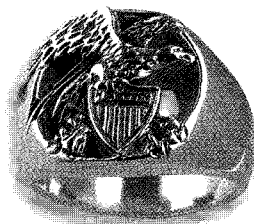


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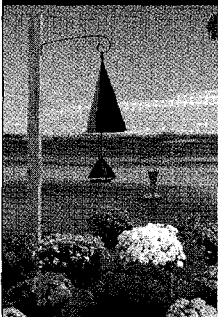
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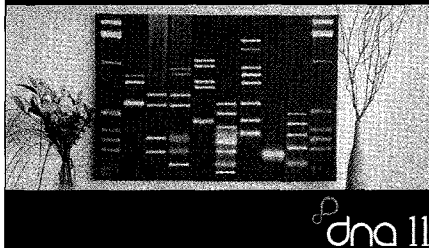


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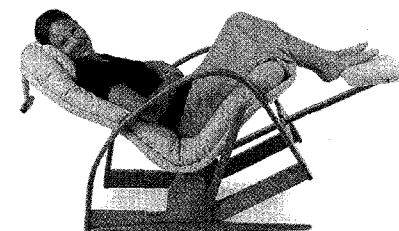
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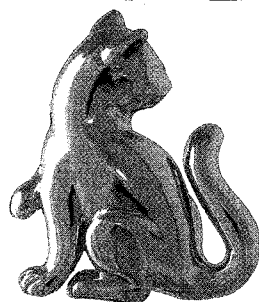
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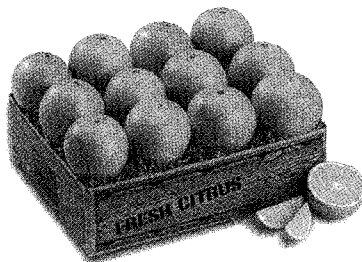
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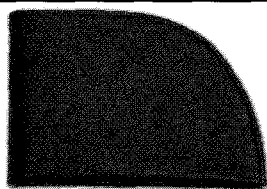
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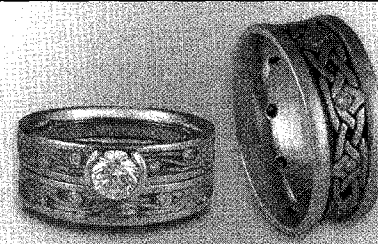


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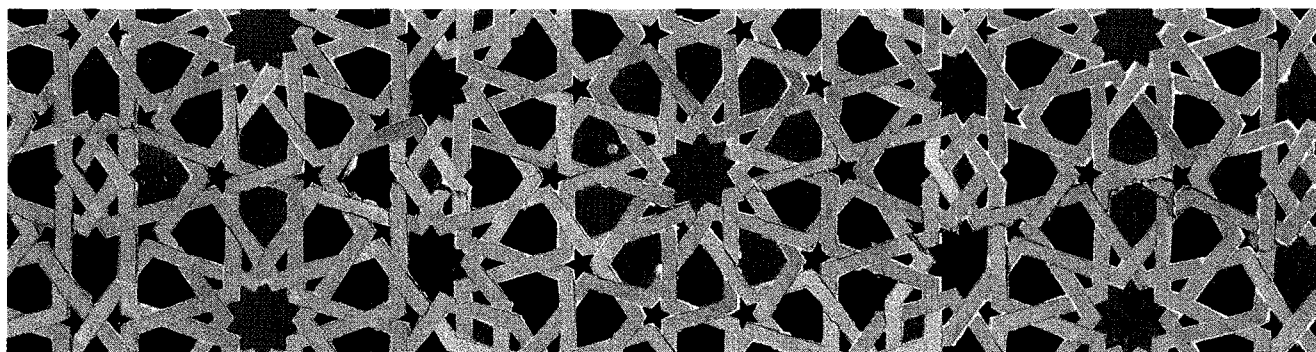
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COVER TO COVER

A Guide to Additional Releases



Too Much Happiness

Alice Munro

KNOPF

Alice Munro knows women. Yes, she's a genius with words no matter what the subject, evoking lives rich with secret horrors, but it's her skill at articulating the nuances of the female experience that makes one gasp with the shock of recognition. This collection, set mostly in classic Munro territory—out-of-the-way places around Ontario—boasts as many of these illuminating moments as her other books. Here, stripped of sentimentality as always, are a woman's habit of becoming quickly intimate with a new friend, her vulnerability to controlling men, her suspicion of women whose style is different from her own. The reader's only dissatisfaction arises from the title piece, a novella about the Russian-born Sophia Kovalevsky (a real person), who was both a celebrated mathematician and a novelist. Munro covers so rapidly such a vast spread of material here—from late-19th-century radicalism, to relations between men and women and between sisters and between students and mentors, to mathematical theory, to the temperaments of the citizens of various European countries, to the status of women—that in the end, one feels as delirious as the tale's subject, who is literally short of



oxygen. A novella can be a powerful literary form, but it too often serves as a designation for a bloated short story or an underdeveloped novel. It's the latter in this case. No matter: Munro is the best living fiction writer in our language. When will she be awarded the Nobel?

The Arabs: A History

Eugene Rogan

BASIC

Describing the Arab world as perpetually reacting to the superpower du jour, Rogan, an Oxford scholar, provides a prism through which the lay Westerner can view five centuries of tumult, zealotry, and complication. During this period, Rogan writes, Arabs have had to contend with four geopolitical eras: the Ottoman Empire, European colonialism, the Cold War, and the current U.S. hegemony. But they have not been "passive subjects in a unilinear history of decline." Rather, these diverse people—making up a "national community stretching from Morocco through Arabia" and distinguishing themselves via wondrous linguistic, religious, and aesthetic achievements—"have worked with the rules when it suited them, subverted the rules when they got in the way, and suffered the consequences when they crossed the dominant powers of the day." Deeply erudite and distinctly humane, Rogan

consistently plays up (and never papers over) the bountiful East-West parallels: "Nationalism, imperialism, revolution, industrialization, rural urban migration, the struggle for women's rights—all the great themes of human history in the modern age have played out in the Arab world."

Make Room for Daddy:

The Journey From Waiting Room to Birthing Room

Judith Walzer Leavitt

NORTH CAROLINA

Keenly considering the evolution of parental roles from a feminist perspective, Leavitt elucidates a hidden-in-plain-view patch of modern domesticity. Drawing on five decades' worth of expectant fathers' firsthand accounts, medical literature, hospital records, and pop-culture references, the noted historian takes readers from the quaint passivity of the 1940s (when waiting rooms, aka "Stork Clubs," let husbands sit out the messy blessed event, a smoke in hand) to today's treacly-cum-salutary, Lamaze-enlightened refrain *We're pregnant*. Amusing and absorbing throughout, this book is most provocative when it details the "three P's": the "place, privilege, and power" of childbirth that "provide a lens through which to view larger issues of twentieth-century medicine and its inequalities," class foremost among them. ■

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WHAT'S YOUR PROBLEM?

By Jeffrey Goldberg



I spend a good part of the day in my woods, planting trees. I'm usually far from the house, so I often relieve myself in the privacy of nature. But if I go several times in the same place, I notice that eventually all the vegetation in that spot dies. I thought I was making a healthy contribution to nature, but no, I am killing it! What's up? What's the toxic ingredient in urine?

H. I., Ogden, Quebec

Dear H. I.,
We at *The Atlantic* look to Henry David Thoreau, a frequent contributor to our pages (though, really, what has he done for us lately?), for guidance on all matters natural, metaphysical, and urinal. Thoreau, of course, spent much useful time in the woods, and he explains in *Walden* that, like you, he selflessly sacrificed at least one of his bodily fluids for nature's good:

I have watered the red huckleberry, the sand cherry and the nettle tree, the red pine and the black ash, the white grape and the yellow violet, which might have withered else in dry seasons.

Thoreau's special friend, the French-Canadian woodcutter Alex Therien, found other uses for urine. Thoreau:

I sometimes found the name of his native parish handsomely written in the snow by the highway, with the proper French accent, and knew that he had passed.

Your urine helps trees grow, as long as you water each one in moderation—urine's high nitrogen content makes it dangerous when applied too liberally to a single plant. As a bonus, if you can write your name in urine, you may be eligible to join the wholesome high jinks at Bohemian Grove.

I would like to take Ambien, the sleep aid, during long airplane flights, but I'm afraid that I won't wake up in case of an emergency. Am I right to be worried?

P. W., Seattle, Wash.

Dear P. W.,
You may be asking the wrong person. I would fly in the "brace for impact" position from takeoff until well after landing if I could. Each time I board a plane, I believe that I am going to die.

This is why I'm an inordinately happy person—because so far I have not died. But enough about me. Although you may need to be woken by a flight attendant, the adrenaline that will surge through your system should counteract the lingering effects of an appropriate dose of Ambien. It would not be responsible of me to recommend that, depending on the likely outcome of the in-flight emergency, you consider swallowing several more Ambien during this adrenalin-induced period of hyper-awareness.

Have you noticed that food stores—delis and the like—have started subtly asking for tips for their employees? I went to a deli the other day, ordered a sandwich at the counter, and handed over my credit card. When the receipt came back, it had a space for a tip. I always thought that tips were supposed to be given only to waiters at sit-down restaurants. These new demands are creating anxiety for me. Are the employees behind the counter now working for tips as well?

J. H., Philadelphia, Pa.

Dear J. H.,
This is indeed a disturbing trend, but not one that should cause you anxiety. If it's anxiety you want, I will provide you with a list of more-substantial worries (the national debt, Ebola-infected burritos, the Washington Nationals). Food-service workers who are not waiters must be paid at least the minimum wage, so they do not, in fact, work for tips. (Waiters are paid a base salary less than the minimum wage, and are expected to report their tips as income. "Expected" as in "not expected.") If you are a kind and appreciative person, you could ask the clerk serving you at the counter if he does, indeed, work mainly for tips. If he answers yes, leave him a generous gratuity and report his employer to your local tax authority. **A**

To submit your question or request for advice, please e-mail advice@theatlantic.com. Include your full name and address.

JASON FORD/HEART AGENCY

Last year, nearly 5,000 teens died in car crashes.



MAKING IT SAFER FOR A TEEN TO BE IN A WAR ZONE THAN ON A HIGHWAY.



There are few issues more in need of our united support than stopping the #1 killer of our nation's teenagers: car crashes. **While some states have tried individually to address this epidemic, Allstate believes that a federal law is needed to effectively reduce the number of teen driving deaths.**

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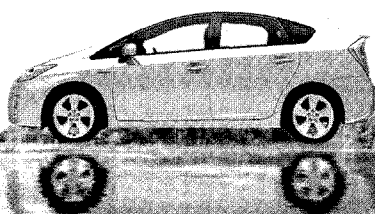
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*The STANDUP Act is the Safe Teen And Novice Driver Uniform Protection Act of 2009.

Sources: Insurance Institute for Highway Safety Fatality Facts 2006, 2007 (latest data available); Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2008. The Cupped Hands logo is a registered service mark and "That's Allstate's Stand" is a service mark of Allstate Insurance Company, Northbrook, IL. © 2009 Allstate Insurance Company.

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